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Why the Communists wanted the Rosenbergs dead

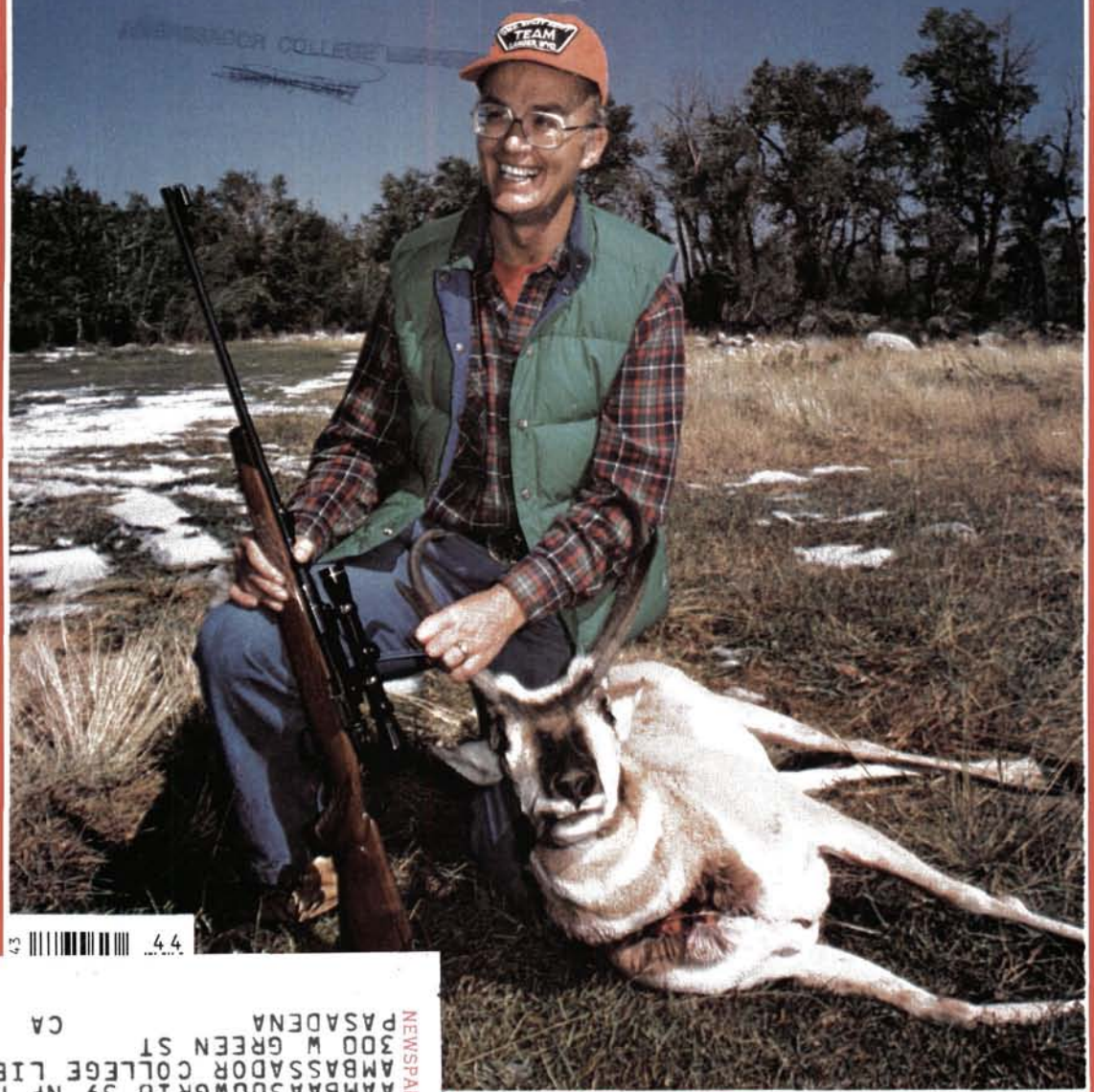
TRB on Christmas • 'The Big Chill' • On Buñuel • Post-feminist wimps

THE NEW REPUBLIC

OCT 1 7

Jim Watt Gets His

Or the antelope's revenge, by Eleanor Randolph



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CORRESPONDENCE

THOUGHTS ON THE MARCH

To the editors:

Your tour de force criticism of the 1983 March for Jobs, Peace and Freedom ("March To Nowhere," TNR, September 19 & 26) ends with a constructive and insightful discussion of the burgeoning female-headed household in the black community after a destructive, glib, and mean-spirited critique of black leadership and interests, especially affirmative action. Although marches and demonstrations are not my thing, I was impressed with the broad-based support for the 1983 march, which did not exist for the 1963 march.

I was saddened by the insensitivity, superciliousness, and callousness of your discussion of the black predicament. You gratuitously ridicule and savage black leadership and organizations. You facetiously, but correctly, recognize that it is no tragedy for a Jew to have to go to the University of Chicago Law School rather than Harvard, and leap facilely to the conclusion that affirmative action in employment and education is unsound, "unacceptable" when "it means" the buzz word, "quotas." You have the obscene temerity to criticize blacks for "the absence of a vivid moral vision" while a perspicuous morality is the strongest and most profound basis of affirmative action: where there is a wrong or injury there should be a remedy. Do you question whether blacks have been wronged and injured in the past and continue to be wronged and injured today? Do you question that many whites today have been enriched unjustly by the slavery and second-class citizenship experiences of blacks?

Finally, the most blatant and cruel oppression of blacks continues to be this country's unconscionable toleration of very high unemployment rates for blacks in general and teenagers and males in particular. This latter fact explains much of the reason for the dissolution of the black family and the escalation of the dysfunctional single female-headed household.

KENNETH S. TOLLETT
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

Your splendid editorial, "March To Nowhere," easily ranks with the finest that I've ever read on the state of black America. A fair balance was maintained throughout between praise of black progress and constructive criticism. This is no easy task, and you came close to the edge a number of times in blaming the victim for his plight. But the basic position of the editorial—that blacks themselves should assume far more responsibility for their ultimate destiny—rings resoundingly in the ears of any aware black citizen.

You made a strong—if not quite convincing—case for black progress, since 1963, referring to it as "massive achievements." Achievements? Yes. But massive? They seem massive only because our condition was at such a low ebb to begin with. But in light of the fact that this is the United States of America, the proud leader of the free world, with an unrivaled gross national product of some $3 trillion, the achievements, though progressive,

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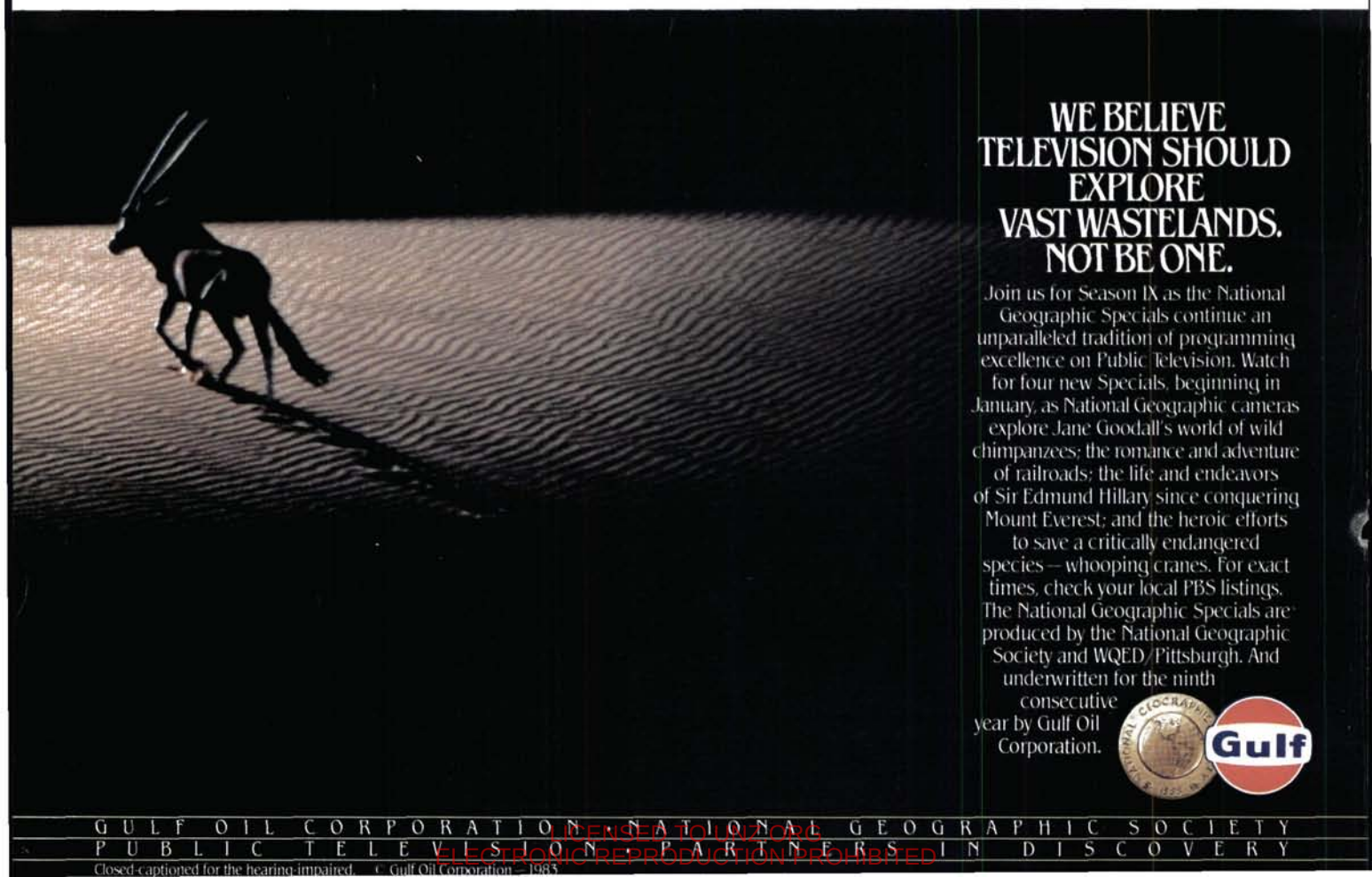
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FROM WASHINGTON

Away With A Manger

It's getting to be that time of year again, and Christmas just wouldn't be Christmas without the American Civil Liberties Union's annual campaign to rid the nation of religious displays on government property. (Mary McGrory once accused the A.C.L.U. of "pursuing the spirit of Christmas across the land like a thief.") Washington got a foretaste of this beloved seasonal rite (like a snowstorm in October) when the Supreme Court, on day two of its new term, heard oral arguments about a nativity scene in Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

According to the A.C.L.U. brief, the offending tableau is ten by fourteen feet and "includes a stable approximately four and one-half (4-1/2) feet high, together with thirteen to fifteen figures ranging in height from one (1) foot"—guess who?—"to five (5) feet. The figures include a baby lying in a manger, arms outstretched, two angels, several animals, and several figures kneeling in a posture of worship." This threat to our freedom was purchased in 1973 for $1,365.

The A.C.L.U. may be right that government-sponsored nativity scenes violate the First Amendment's injunction against the "establishment of religion." Past Supreme Court rulings about the establishment clause have been a bit confusing. When I was studying for the bar exam, we were taught that the best way to guess which pro-religion government activities pass muster was the mnemonic device of the letter "t": *t*extbook subsidies for parochial schools, charitable *t*ax deductions, and so on. Parochial school lunches ("*t*una fish") are O.K., too. On the other hand, the Court ruled in 1980 that posting the *T*en Commandments in public schools is unconstitutional, so my education is clearly out of date. Recreating a central moment of Christianity in the center of town does seem to imply some sort of endorsement, despite comic claims by the Justice Department (which supports Pawtucket) merely that it recognizes the religious element in a secular folk tradition.

Nevertheless, it wearies me to see the A.C.L.U. expending its limited resources of money and goodwill playing the Grinch like this. Obviously the mere fact that its position is unpopular is no reason for the A.C.L.U. to shy away. Unpopular causes are the only ones that need civil liberties protection. The A.C.L.U.'s greatest glory of recent years was defending the right of Nazis to march in Skokie, Illinois.

But that was a defense of free expression—the A.C.L.U.'s central mission—and a rejection of intolerance. The anti-crèche campaign has nothing to do with free expression (of religion or speech), and in a funny way it reflects a spirit of intolerance. What, after all, is wrong with a publicly sponsored crèche? It's obviously not the money, which is trivial compared to other ways government supports religion (tax deductions, for example). The problem is the appearance of official sanction, which is taken as an affront.

"On a practical level," the A.C.L.U. writes, "a child whose family does not believe in the Divinity of Christ must view the public crèche as a symbolic representation of his or her status as an outsider. The child will question . . . his identification with the American culture."

I think that's right. But I also think this child had better learn early on to question his identification with the American culture, because it's a tough question that will follow him all his life no matter how successful the A.C.L.U. is in banning nativity scenes. There *is* a majority culture in this country. It is Christian, white, middle class. Jews and nonbelievers (I am both) *are* outsiders to some extent in that culture. So are blacks, homosexuals, Orientals, and so on. This is so even though we are a society that is constantly remaking itself, and a society committed to protecting the civil rights and economic opportunities of minorities. The battle for minority rights goes on, of course, but does final victory require eradication of the majority culture? And is every manifestation of that culture an insult to those who aren't fully a part of it?

People who want to go through life with nothing to remind them of their minority status ask too much. They will not get it, and full civil equality does not require it. Furthermore, in the name of ethnic or religious or racial or sexual awareness, they would impose a vast unawareness on national life in which, for official purposes, most Americans are of no particular race or religion (or equally divided among all).

In theory, there is a difference between the society and the polity. In practice, the difference is impossible to police. The majority culture needs some degree of government sanction, and attempts to prevent the government from recognizing this are futile. December 25 has to be a national holiday. If we are going to get any work done at all we can't add Chanukah and Ramadan.

Anyone who is truly affronted by the sight of a publicly sponsored crèche is (to repeat Joel Sayre's famous crack about John O'Hara) "a master of the fancied slight." This official recognition of the majority culture totally lacks the unnerving gratuitousness of, say, the late Interior Secretary James Watt's terminal asininity about women, blacks, Jews, and cripples. What was so chilling about this remark? The labels themselves, except for "cripple," were not insulting. What shocked, I think, was the unwitting revelation of how aware a man like Watt is of the "otherness" of people around him, and the implicit contrast to himself as a whole, white, male, Christian American. It reminded me of an eerie occasion in high school when I went to dinner at a friend's house and his mother told me apropos of nothing, that she didn't know how to make chicken soup.

Far from being a handicap, a sense of "outsiderness" can be a great asset in a society that does, in the end, try to protect the rights of cultural outsiders. It energizes, promotes skepticism, gives perspective. I would not want my child to grow up completely comfortable in his surroundings, never forced to "question . . . his identification with the American culture." The enormous literary contribution of homosexuals, the prominence of Jews in courageous social causes of all sorts, the creation of jazz by blacks all derive in part from the discomfort of being outside the majority culture. I am happy to be a bit of an outsider in my own country. I am no less an American for it, and may even hope to be a better one as a result.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
OCTOBER 31, 1983

CONSTRUCTIVE ENRAGEMENT

Many of the conflicts that mar the world are conspicuous for their complexity. There are conflicts, however, that are not so complex, that arise out of a political evil so great that the moral response required is easy. South Africa is such a case. Nearly 3 million whites deny in every theoretical and practical way the rights of nearly 32 million blacks. No government in existence is more racist, more dedicated to the degradation of men and women due to the color of their skin, than the South African government.

The Reagan Administration has argued that the problem of South Africa may be morally easy but politically difficult, that geopolitical considerations do not permit us to ruin our relations with the strongest country on the African continent, that, in the words of Chester Crocker, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, "it is not our task to choose between black and white in South Africa." The Administration has pursued a policy that it calls "constructive engagement." It somewhat resembles the policy it has pursued toward "authoritarian" regimes in our own hemisphere. We can influence our friends, not our enemies, the argument runs; and we need our friends.

It has been almost three years since South Africa was constructively engaged, and the President has nothing to show for it. In its foreign policy South Africa has behaved a little like Argentina—it has manipulated us, and played upon our strategic anguish for its own profit. It still occupies Namibia, in defiance of international law and political good sense; and it silences all criticism with the mention of Cuban troops in the north. Elsewhere, in Lesotho and Mozambique, the Botha regime has embarked on military adventures. In its domestic policy, the South African government has presided over an increase in repression; it persists in the torture of political prisoners, in the invention of new restrictions upon the press, in its forced "resettlement" and "influx control" programs to keep blacks in their "homelands." Recently it has proposed a new constitution that would create chambers of parliament for the country's 2.8 million "coloreds" and eight hundred fifty thousand Indians, but would leave the tens of millions of blacks out of parliament, and more generally out of citizenship. Under the government's preferred arrangement, moreover, the white chamber would rule without regard to the brown chamber, and the president, who must be white and Afrikaner, would have the power to dissolve the lower chamber and declare martial law.

South Africa, thus engaged, thus constructs. But Congress has lost patience with these circumlocutions. Representative Stephen Solarz, Democrat of New York, has proposed an amendment to the Export Administration Act that would require American firms in South Africa to follow fair employment practices (to end segregation at the workplace; to offer equal employment and equal pay; to establish a minimum wage; to recognize labor unions; and so on). Three hundred fifty American firms in South Africa employ over one hundred thousand people. The question of managerial morality in the kingdom of apartheid, therefore, is real. The Solarz amendment also calls for a ban on American bank loans to the South African government, except for loans designed to develop health, housing, and educational facilities that are not closed to blacks. This provision is similar to the Evans amendment of 1978, which barred the Export-Import Bank from expanding credit in support of any South African export that enabled the enforcement of apartheid; like the Solarz amendment, it included a provision for lifting the restriction if the President certified that progress toward the elimination of apartheid had been made. Passage of the Solarz proposal would advise the Botha government that the United States can no longer countenance the official lie that American money has been used in the interests of racial equality. Finally, the Solarz amendment would prohibit the importation of the krugerrand or any other gold coin minted in South Africa for sale in the U.S. Since 1974, when American citizens were permitted to purchase gold, krugerrands have crashed into the American market, and the South African government has earned about $363 million.

The Solarz amendment deserves to be passed by the House. It will not put an end to apartheid; only South Africans can do that. But it will put an end to America's complaisance about it. American policy toward South Af-

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rica is a test of America's moral credibility. For reasons of state the United States must have a working relationship with South Africa, but for reasons of humanity it must not appear to like it. A slackening of America's sentiment for its South African ally will cost nothing in security, for them or for us; but it will unslacken our conscience.

The gain from a diminution of our complicity in apartheid will not be only moral. It will be political, too. North of this country is a whole continent. The alienation of the continent is a high price to pay for the alliance with the country. The nations of Africa must have a reason to respect the United States; and to the extent that they do not there will be opportunities for the Soviet Union. From the standpoint of the competition with the Russians, the American fondness for South Africa is simply a sin of commission.

The Solarz amendment does not call for a dramatic disruption of the present state of relations with South Africa. It would send a signal—to the whites of South Africa, that they not mistake cooperation for community, and to the blacks of South Africa, that they not despair. Still, even this is too much for some, and the measure has stirred a serious debate in the House. Conservatives are claiming that liberals are selective in their sense of outrage. They have a point; some of Mr. Solarz's supporters in the House would not support a move against the financial credit of a Communist country. (And black nations trade madly with South Africa.) Still, this is not a stone that conservatives should cast first. Some of Mr. Solarz's opponents seem to be able to live with a lot in, say, Guatemala. Mr. Solarz has anyway replied to the point: "While it is true that we have not acted against human rights violations everywhere, that fact hardly countenances a policy of acting against human rights abuses nowhere." In fact the debate in the House is a little distorted. The burden of proof falls upon the Administration, not upon its critics. It must show that its better idea has worked. This, however, it cannot do. Constructive engagement has disappointed. It is time for constructive enragement.

THE RADOSH-MILTON FILE

This week THE NEW REPUBLIC is co-sponsoring with *The Nation* a debate at New York's Town Hall between Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton, authors of *The Rosenberg File*, and Walter and Miriam Schneir, authors of *Invitation to An Inquest*. Rarely has an issue of historical fact produced so much passion. Most critics—ours included (see "Rosenbergs Redux," page 30)—have praised *The Rosenberg File*. And most have emphasized the book's sensitivity to the evidence and its careful conclusion that although Julius Rosenberg was guilty of espionage, the government's behavior in the case was inconsistent with American justice.

The Rosenbergs' remaining defenders—in particular, the Schneirs and Michael Meeropol, the eldest son of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg—have sought to prove that the research and conclusions of the Radosh-Milton book are wrong. This is a wholly legitimate exercise. But on the eve of the Town Hall debate, the Fund for Open Information and Accountability, Inc.—whose success in winning release of the F.B.I.'s Rosenberg case files under the Freedom of Information Act made the Radosh-Milton book possible—has issued its official answer to that book, in the form of a thirty-two-page pamphlet.

The pamphlet is a smear. In an essay entitled "The Witch-Hunter's 'Truth,' " the Rutgers historian Norman Markowitz makes the outrageous charge that the Radosh-Milton book's portrait of Julius Rosenberg "conforms to age-old anti-Semitic stereotypes of Jews as disloyal and greedy," and accuses the authors of "apologizing" for anti-Semitism. In language that is supposed to have gone out with *The Daily Worker*, Mr. Markowitz writes, "Now, the government, the F.B.I., and the capitalist class that they serve have in Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton two defenders of their position, one an apostate New Leftist, posing as disinterested proponents of 'historical truth.' "

In another critique, Ann Mari Buitrago, a member of the F.O.I.A., Inc., board, notes that the "line" of the Radosh-Milton book supports "the kind of hysterical anti-Communism Reagan has employed in fashioning a dangerous foreign policy in Central America"—a curious charge in view of the very tough attack on that foreign policy Mr. Radosh has contributed to the current (Fall) issue of *Dissent*.

But Ms. Buitrago goes further than simply portraying the authors, falsely, as right-wingers. She writes that the Radosh-Milton book "takes up the F.B.I.'s case against the Rosenbergs where the government left off and pursues it with the same disregard for the truth and justice and with the same political objectives. In fact, their work has all the earmarks and objective consequences of an F.B.I. Cointelpro operation". Positing an "offensive" by the "intelligence agencies," she writes, "The Radosh-Milton book is a dishonest and dishonorable part of that offensive." No evidence is adduced in support of this poisonous fantasy.

It should not be imagined that this sort of reaction has been universal on the left. On the contrary, the book has been strongly defended. Most striking was James Weinstein's courageous review in the socialist weekly *In These Times*, which argued that the authors had done the American left a service by examining their own preconceptions "honestly and fearlessly," because it is crucial for the left "to understand its own history and the reasons for its continual failure to gain popular credibility."

Perhaps the leftists who run F.O.I.A., Inc., are not interested in credibility, only in faith. Their fulminations warrant attention only because of the distinguished group which makes up the board of directors and the sponsors of F.O.I.A., Inc. The board includes the actor Edward Asner, the historian Barton J. Bernstein, the political scientist Richard Falk, and the Nobel Laureate George Wald. The sponsors include Noam Chomsky, Barry Commoner, Eugene D. Genovese, Robert Heilbroner, Joseph Papp, and

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Representatives John Conyers, Ron Dellums, Parren Mitchell, and Theodore Weiss.

Their various views of the Rosenberg case and the Radosh-Milton book are not at issue here. We're sure that few if any of those listed on the organization's masthead had any direct knowledge of what has now appeared with their imprimatur. Nevertheless, in the interest of intellectual responsibility and political credibility, do they not have the duty to dissociate themselves publicly from this new and nasty form of left-wing McCarthyism?

'Not A Chivalrous Affair'

Roald Dahl has a great reputation among readers of English fiction as the author of some of the best cruel stories and children's stories in the language. His work is marked by a strange blend of sadism and philosophical speculation. His politics, it turns out, are a little like that, too, except there is nothing philosophical about them. Dahl has published in *The Literary Review*, a five-year-old English monthly, a review of *God Cried*, by Tony Clifton and Catherine Leroy, a picture book about the 1982 Lebanese war that is pure propaganda. Mr. Dahl likes the book; it makes him "violently anti-Israeli." His review, called "Not a Chivalrous Affair," amply shows this. It is the ugliest piece of anti-Semitism to appear in a respectable setting for a long time. For example:

> Is the American President and the Senate and the Congress so utterly dominated by the great Jewish financial institutions over there that they dare not defy them? And what, pray, do those powerful American Jewish bankers think about the murdering of 25,000 people in one month?

And:

> Mr. Begin and Mr. Sharon are almost the exact carbon copies in miniature of Mr. Hitler and Mr. Goering. They are equally short-sighted and no less bloodthirsty.
>
> We had the Nuremberg Trials after the Hitler war. It is tragic and ironic that now, only thirty-seven years later, Begin and Sharon and a number of other Israeli leaders should themselves be qualifying for the same treatment. Try them all, I say.

Finally:

> And yet, is it not rather wonderful that the German nation, once so hated, has today succeeded in rehabilitating itself and becoming anti-Nazi. Now is the time for the Jews of the world to follow the example of the Germans and become anti-Israeli. But do they have the conscience? And do they, I wonder, have the guts? Or must Israel, like Germany, be brought to her knees before she learns how to behave in this world?

This was too much even for some who agree with Mr. Dahl's assessment of Operation Peace in Galilee. *The New Statesman*, a London left Labour weekly, in its August 26 issue, asked Mr. Dahl to explain. He explained that the Jews were "cowards" in the Second World War and "even a stinker like Hitler didn't just pick on them for no reason."

We rub our readers' noses in this filth for a number of reasons. First, because anti-Semitism must not be allowed to pass, period. Second, because writers have a special moral status in our culture. Of this status Roald Dahl deserves to be stripped. One of his most famous works is a story called "Genesis and Catastrophe," a tale that has the reader rooting for the health of a baby who turns out to be Adolf Hitler; the story now seems wicked in a wholly new way. Third, because Mr. Dahl's review was published in a journal owned by the same man who owns the house that published the book he reviewed. That this man brought out this book is perhaps no wonder; he is a Palestinian, and Palestinians are understandably bitter about their suffering, even if they do nothing sensible about it. That he brought out this review, however, is another matter, and corrupt. Fourth, because the story of Mr. Dahl's sentiments has reached America in a time-honored and twisted way. The media report that the Israeli Broadcasting Authority has decided not to show Roald Dahl's "Tales of the Unexpected" on Israeli television. That is all. No report of who really insulted whom. Instead, another tale, not at all unexpected, of Israeli censorship and Jewish paranoia.

Notebook

□ IN 1979 THE ARCHBISHOP of Kraków, Karol Wojtyla, was elected head of the Roman Catholic Church. In 1980, Czeslaw Milosz, whose works had been banned and suppressed in his native country, won the Nobel Prize in literature. And now, Lech Walesa has emerged from a long campaign of official vilification to become the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. For the Poles, the award is yet another of their brief and glorious triumphs over history. For their well-wishers abroad, it is an occasion to affirm Solidarity with a brave man and with millions of his countrymen, whose affection and loyalty he so justly commands.

□ FIFTY YEARS AGO IN THE NEW REPUBLIC: "Disarmament turns out to be a process hardly less dangerous than arming. No one has any firm belief that any convention, however meaningless, will emerge from the Geneva Conference. The quotations of armament shares are soaring in the market, for if there is no convention we shall face an early risk of war. It is hard to say what it is, in this atmosphere of alarm, that governments really fear. I find it hard to believe that they actually fear Hitler. His preparations, if he is arming secretly, must require several years more to mature, and even then the odds against him, while Poland and Russia fraternize, and the French system of alliances holds firm, would be overwhelming." ("Preventive War?" by H. N. Brailsford, November 1, 1933.)

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Fast Eddie takes on Dull Dave.

THE HEALER RETURNETH

Louisiana politics is of an intensity and complexity that are matched, in my experience, only in the Republic of Lebanon.

—A.J. Liebling, 1960

New Orleans

LEST YOU THINK for a moment that the Louisiana governor's race is an ordinary political event, let's forget the fanfare and get right to the heart of the matter: pardons. Gubernatorial pardons, 1,181 of them. That's how many Edwin Edwards granted in his last four-and-a-half years as this state's last Democratic governor. It averages out to just about one every other day, as the Republican incumbent, Dave Treen, gleefully points out. Now if that seems a bit peculiar, stay tuned for Edwards's strangely indisputable explanation. "Shall we forget," he cries in his Cajun-French accent, "that the great Man God Himself who walked amongst us died on the cross to pardon people who realized they had made a mistake but wanted a second chance? And anyway," he laughs as the crowd roars, "I thought Republicans knew all about pardons." Welcome to Louisiana.

This is a race between an intensely charismatic ex-governor who (many argue) isn't particularly honest, and an aggressively honest incumbent who (most agree) isn't particularly interesting. In the state that thrives on Tabasco and Mardi Gras, dullness is the only unforgivable sin. Therefore Dave Treen is in big trouble.

These are tough times in Louisiana. Unemployment is at a record 12.5 percent, almost double since Edwards left office in 1979. Treen supporters blame the recession for devastating Louisiana's crucial oil and gas industries, but voters remember the good ol' days and associate the flamboyant Edwards with the boom that was. And if there are any who think the good times may be gone for good, Edwards is everywhere reassuring them in a style unlike that of any politician in America. "You that are elderly and have seen your funds cut, you that are crippled, blind, poor, or disabled," he exhorts, "you that have suffered these long three-and-a-half years, take heart. Take heart, for on October 22 the great healer shall returneth. And he shall make ye well!"

It's lines like these that the handsome Edwards delivers as his huge motorcade, like some vision from a forgotten political past, tours the state. Surrounded by a score of pistol-toting, walkie-talkie-waving bodyguards, Edwards is greeted with an enthusiasm bordering on hysteria, the crowds pouring in for autographs, hungry for a fleeting touch. And when in South Louisiana he breaks out his native Cajun-French, it's like Beatlemania.

In an infinitely more colorful version of the lines hurled at Reagan by the Democratic Presidential hopefuls, Edwards blasts Treen for his 33 percent tax cut, which he claims has resulted in a reduction of human services across the board, from state schools to the Edwards-created Right To Bite program, which helps senior citizens buy dentures. "Can you imagine doing that?" Edwards asks the rapt crowds in small towns with names like Bunkie and Ville Platte. "Let's face it, when you get to 65 there ain't much fun left except eating. Treen's not content to take little bites out of us, he's trying to gum us to death!"

"Edwards Giveth . . . Treen Taketh Away!" heads the Edwards brochure. The Republican understandably asks where Edwards expects to get the money to do all this giving, and though the ex-governor advocates the repeal of Treen's tax cut, it's doubtful that this alone would pay for the sorts of programs the Democrat is promoting. But to the dismay of the Treen campaign, no one much seems to care.

EDWARDS'S PITCH is aimed at the low-income whites and blacks who comprise his hard-core base. In an interesting experiment whose outcome may have repercussions for the 1984 Republican national effort, Treen is waging a fierce battle to lure black support. His appeal is based on his efforts to involve blacks in leadership roles in his administration, rather than the quantity of funds he has allocated to social programs. "I've done more to place blacks in decision-making positions than any other governor in our state's history," Treen boasts, and it seems to be true. Three of his cabinet secretaries are black, and in three-and-a-half years he's more than doubled the number of blacks appointed to boards, commissions, and executive posts.

Knowing how blacks feel about Reagan, Treen has been careful to avoid mentioning his party's leader or calling on the Administration for help. But under the best of circumstances, it's tough for a Republican to get even the 12 to 15 percent of the black vote that Treen is shooting for (in 1979 he received only 3 percent). The Edwards camp is confident. However, the Treen campaign is expending tremendous resources, and if it is successful in garnering an unusually high black vote, more of an effort will be made in similar quests by other Republicans in '84.

For both the black and white electorate, Treen is fighting Edwards's image as a mover and shaker, a can-do populist. "Most people think Edwards is a pistol; he's hot," says John McGinnis, who is writing a book about the campaign. "He's seen as somebody who can get things off dead center, make it happen." It's that ability to make it happen which the Treen people question, pointing to the 1,181 pardons; the twenty-seven grand jury investigations of Edwards or his associates; the $10,000 his wife got from Tongsun Park, the South Korean lobbyist; the off-hand statements like "Lying is a big part of my job"; the sprees in Las Vegas. Fast Eddie, they call him. "The question is," Treen asks almost plaintively, "do the good people of this state think their best interests will be served by a return to a playboy administration?"

Right now the answer seems to be yes. Louisiana politics is not just great theater. It is, amazingly enough, the

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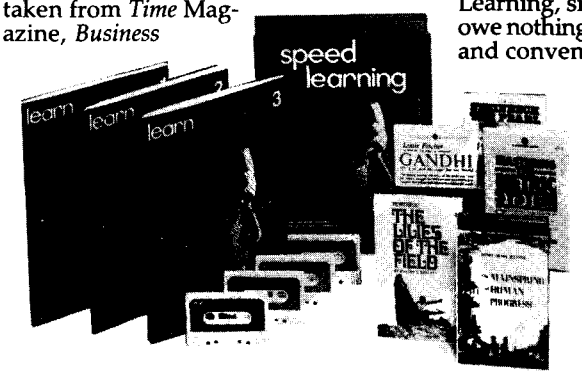

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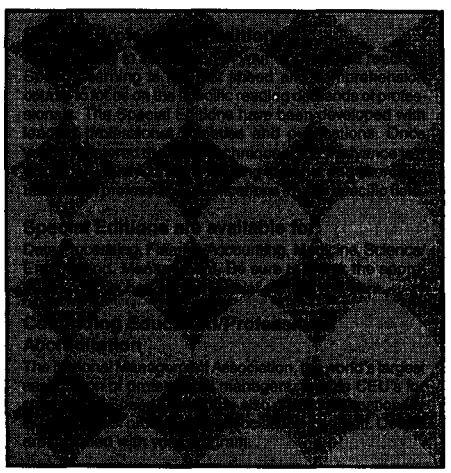

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state's third largest industry, with corporate and individual contributions reaching phenomenal levels. In 1979 over $20 million was spent in the gubernatorial race, one of the largest sums ever blown on a non-Presidential race. That's just under two-thirds of the amount a Presidential nominee is granted for his national campaign. And Louisiana is a state with just 2 million registered voters. This year they are spending like sailors, too.

For this kind of money people expect some entertainment, and, in some cases, more tangible rewards. Dave Treen's problem is that more often than not he has failed to deliver either. There probably isn't another state in the country where a decent, reform-minded and performance-oriented governor like Treen wouldn't be reelected. But this is the state the Longs made. In 1979 Treen capitalized on the excitement of a fresh approach, the appeal of the unknown. In 1983, Edwards's showy exuberance is proving to be a tough match for the quiet benefits of reform. As Edwards's aide, Sid Moreland, put it, "A Republican governor once every hundred years isn't so bad. But only once."

STUART P. STEVENS

Stuart P. Stevens, a consultant for many Southern political campaigns, writes articles about Southern politics.

The borders of freedom.

EXIT

THE SOVIET UNION has treated us recently to several lectures about the sanctity of its borders. You never would have guessed that the focus of the Communist bloc's particular effort is keeping people *in*; it is the United States that has a problem about keeping people out. This touchiness of tyrannical governments about people and things leaving was first noticed by Benjamin Constant, the author of *Adolphe* and lover of Madam de Stäel, who lived through the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, Napoleon, and into the Bourbon Restoration. He got it just right in his distinction between the liberty of the ancients and the liberty of the moderns. For the ancients, liberty meant a political community not subject to external domination; the liberty of the moderns is the liberty of an individual to make a life for himself free from the control of *any* political community. Constant's experiences led him to conclude that a man is not necessarily freer if he is tyrannized by one of his own compatriots or even by the mass of them. Constant's description of tyranny and its pretensions—particularly its pretensions to speak in the name of the people—is remarkably fresh. So is his observation that the liberty of the moderns—true liberty—has become possible by the substitution of wealth in money for wealth in land. He knew whereof he spoke when he pointed out how a modern dissident can more easily escape the tyrant's grasp by slipping over a border with a nest-egg in his pocket. This observation was not merely historical; the very portability of wealth was at once a guarantor of individual liberty and a limit of a tyrant's reach.

CONSTANT WAS A shrewd man. Experience has shown that exit has always been the last resort of the individual against tyranny—collective and noncollective. And the degree of rage with which authority reacts to those who would escape its grasp is a particularly sensitive barometer of the liberality of a regime. That point is made in its most extreme form at the Berlin Wall. Why is it that East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet Union are so fiercely determined to bar the exits of their societies, while even such miserable regimes as those of South Africa and Chile couldn't care less who leaves, though both put severe restrictions on the flight of capital, thus giving a measure of their lack of confidence in their own futures? There is something about communist ideology that is peculiarly threatened by the thought that individuals might escape its authority. Is it their nightmare that maybe everybody would leave? There is something about the turned back, the retreating footstep that is a profound denial of the claim to control, the claim that makes tyranny possible. (In this respect, as others, Castro has been something of a maverick.)

Though the cinder-block wall, double barbed wire fence with the strip of land, plowed and mined in between, are extreme cases, more attenuated but still recognizable versions of the mentality behind them can be discerned among bureaucrats, social planners, and collectivists on the other side of the Iron Curtain as well. The manifestations are more subtle, the justifications more plausible. Consider President Mitterrand's action forbidding Frenchmen to take more than $350 a year out of their country. There are, I suppose, many things to be said for and against such a move, but through the tangle of the technical controversy I discern the frustrated planner's reflex: to bar the exits to those who show their backs to the great socialist experiment.

Surely I am exaggerating. After all, the only thing at stake is a holiday on the Costa Brava. Students, scholars, businessmen, and anyone with a friend abroad to put him up can still leave. But exchange controls are a way of locking the exits. They are a way of discouraging people from voting with their feet—in this case voting with their pockets. It is, of course, a far greater offense to make the very person the prisoner of someone's dream for the community. But as Constant noted, for most people who do not have a unique and transportable talent, money represents the concrete expression of their effort, talent, and good luck. To hold a man's money in while letting his person out seems liberal principally to the intellectual who imagines that he carries his fortune in his head. For most

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people, however, what they have earned is in some sense the precipitate of who they are and have been.

This same door-closing reflex has been at work in the United States as well. Remember it was a desperate Lyndon Johnson who sought to trick the economy as he had tricked the Congress by hiding the costs of his war; it was he who brought in the first shadow of exchange controls to postwar America, the first attempt to discourage the export of capital—i.e., to lock the exits. It is striking that the same political motivations that led to closing the economic door were also the cause of perhaps the only set of political refugees to flee America in our recent history—those seeking to avoid fighting in the Vietnam War.

OUR OWN political scene displays several exit-locking reflexes, clearly the response by dismayed politicians to the flight response of those who do not like what the welfare state has accomplished. Several years ago the Episcopal Bishop of New York inveighed in tones of moral outrage against corporations removing their corporate headquarters across the border to Connecticut or New Jersey in order to escape to lower levels of taxation and higher levels of amenity. And proposals have been floated in a number of states to postpone or bar plant closings. You know the arguments—they all have to do with refusing to share the burdens now that the advantages had diminished; they talk about the subsidies that the "runaway" firm has enjoyed, the debt that it refuses to pay. Arguments, like people, can in part be judged by the company they keep. And it is just these arguments that are used by the Soviets to prevent emigration, and by the Rumanians, who levy an impossibly high fee on those seeking to emigrate.

The point is that neither individuals nor businesses leave their homes lightly. It is a decision that involves disruption, but also the hope for a new start, a new way of doing things. And it expresses exasperation—exasperation with a community hostile to the realization of one's plans. The exit option is a way of bringing in novelty, fresh starts, adventure, and the unexpected. It is also the ultimate rejection of collective authority, the ultimate gesture of a free man. (For Seneca the exit option of suicide represented the last available assertion of individuality.)

This is why the exit option infuriates the authorities it flouts. It is infuriating symbolically; but it is dangerous practically as well. It demonstrates that there is, after all, are not ultimate, and that if everyone leaves there is no longer anyone whom they collect. To be sure, it is often the more adventurous, the better endowed, the healthier, the more talented, the more spirited who leave. There is, indeed, something callous and selfish in this. But it is also the ultimate response to an excessive egalitarianism. It is the response which shows that enforced egalitarianism is a prescription for misery. And just because it is the sharpest weapon against egalitarianism, it is the one that invokes the greatest fury.

Last year the Supreme Court had before it the constitutionality of the so-called Unitary Tax. The Constitution forbids states from taxing interstate commerce. They may only tax that portion of a business and those assets within their boundaries. Businesses have responded by deploying their subdivisions in such a way as to have as few assets and as little profit in states with high levels of taxation. There are important limits to such a strategy. If one does a lot of business just in California and New York because that is where the customers are, then obviously it is not worth trying to do business somewhere else in order to avoid high levels of taxation in those states. And if Massachusetts is a splendid place to locate a factory, then this may outweigh the very high levels of property taxation in that state—although New Hampshire is very close by. The Unitary Tax (which the Court found constitutional) alters these calculations by giving the state a chunk of worldwide profits measured by the relative presence of the business in that state. Thus a business with one big, fat, money-losing division in state *x* must pay taxes to state *x* on the profits it makes all over the world, as measured by its payroll and assets in that state. The issue is impossibly technical, and it is hard to see any absolute right or wrong in it. It is the reflex that counts. And the reflex is one that seeks to deprive enterprise of the advantages of mobility and to extend the reach and cost of social schemes to those who do not consider them worthwhile, and are willing to vote with their feet to prove it.

FAR MORE down-to-earth is President Reagan's proposal for private school tuition tax credits. Unlike Great Britain, private schools in this country are by no means engines of social stratification. The overwhelming proportion of private education in this country takes place in church-related, particularly Roman Catholic, primary and secondary schools. There is no great social difference between the children who go to those schools and those who go to public schools. Nor have Catholic schools shown any disposition to serve as a cover-up for segregationist impulses. The vast majority of those who make a very great sacrifice to send their children to private schools do so because they seek an alternative to what seems to them the indiscipline and lack of concern for basics which have become the hallmark of so many urban public school systems. Chronic troublemakers can be expelled from private schools. Teachers' unions have no power at all to prevent hiring, assignment, and promotion on the basis of merit. The unholy alliance of third-rate local politicians, powerful unions, and organized pressure groups hold no sway.

It is the exit option par excellence, and it infuriates politicians and collectivists more than any other manifestation of that option on our national scene. For nothing shows more palpably the failure of those who have taken charge of public education than the eagerness of so many parents of modest means to make large sacrifices to escape the clutches of their schemes, programs, and tawdry political deals.

Tuition tax credits would make the exit option easier, and that is why they are so controversial. This has nothing to do with rich and poor, black and white, and the issue

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would still be there if the credits were denied to families above some income threshold. Saint Grottlesex and Suburban Country Day School are not the issue. It is purely a question of individual versus collective control. The fact is that many individuals are deeply dissatisfied with the public education system and with the network of union and political alliances that make it particularly hard to change. Those who would take advantage of tuition tax credits would not be escaping their fair share of community burdens, they would be escaping a bankrupt vision—a bankruptcy that its perpetrators cannot bear to admit. If large numbers of ordinary people abandoned the public schools, politicians and teachers finally might face reality and make needed improvements. And if you are inclined to say that all these parents should be forced to keep their children in the public school system and improve it from within, then remember the Rumanian Exit Tax.

CHARLES FRIED

Charles Fried is Carter Professor of General Jurisprudence at Harvard Law School.

Helsinki grows a little bolder.

FINNISH LINE

Helsinki

A LOT OF PEOPLE—Finns included—were startled when Finnair's pilots decided to join the boycott of commercial flights to Moscow in the aftermath of the Korean airline disaster. For the first time since World War II, Finland was publicly putting moral distance between itself and the Soviet Union. Yet this sharing of the West's outrage was only an especially visible expression of Finland's growing self-confidence. It was a sign not of an abrupt turn in foreign policy but of quiet changes that have been transforming Finland from a silent victim of Soviet power into an active international player.

The symbol and agent of those changes is Finland's new president, Mauno Koivisto, 59 years old, who recently paid his first official visit to the United States. President Koivisto did not ask President Reagan for arms, loans, or special status. His stay in Washington was simply the Western counterpart to his first official visit to Moscow last June—another component of Finland's "independent neutrality."

Compared to his predecessor, Urho Kekkonen, who ruled for a quarter-century with high-handed gusto (and the blessing of Moscow), Koivisto is modest in demeanor and populist in politics. Koivisto heads the Social Democratic Party, which Moscow had deeply distrusted since before World War II. Koivisto represents a new generation of Social Democrats. His capture of the presidency shows that times have changed—that after twenty-five years of the conciliatory policy of Kekkonen's Conservative Party-led coalitions, Finland can now afford a Koivisto.

"What a contrast to Kekkonen," remarked Seppo Salonen, editor of one of Helsinki's leading dailies. "The old man could get anybody to do anything. When he wanted to score a point with Khrushchev or Brezhnev, he'd get them into a sauna and tell them funny stories." The lonely figure that Koivisto projects is, for many Finns, closer to the Finnish character than was the gregarious Kekkonen. Koivisto is tall, slightly stooped, and roughly handsome. He is rather Lincolnesque in his craggy melancholy and also in his humble origins, having begun as a longshoreman and worked his way through night school to a Ph.D. in philosophy.

LAST YEAR, after Kekkonen resigned because of ill health, "Manu"—as Koivisto is affectionately called—won nearly half the popular votes on the first ballot in a field of eight candidates. He quickly moved to change the style of Finnish government. The presidential authoritarianism practiced by Kekkonen has been replaced by "rule by cabinet." There is talk of restoring parliamentary processes which had been conserved in name but not in practice. This lapse has been defended as a necessary price for Kekkonen's success in Moscow. Jirro Salolainen, a Conservative Member of Parliament, sees it differently. "This is such a country of consensus that there is not even debate in our legislative chamber," he said. "We have ten political parties and each Parliamentarian here works his will behind the scenes. It's a Kekkonen legacy."

For all the criticism of Kekkonen's highly personal, sometimes overbearing rule, Finns concede that he preserved Finnish society in an essentially un-Russified form. The Finns are an anti-Soviet people who guard their Finnish ways with tribal fierceness. Finland remains a nation of deeply rooted democratic institutions. Helsinki, unlike drab Soviet cities, has bloomed in an atmosphere of distinctly un-Communist cheer. This is in the face of the geopolitical realities: a six hundred-mile border shared with the Russians, a Soviet-Finnish mutual assistance treaty signed in 1948, and a history of military defeat (though never of occupation). In the light of all this, the Finns' achievement of a relatively secure place for themselves in the community of Western nations is remarkable.

"It was by reassuring Khrushchev, and then Brezhnev, time and time again that we Finns are not the enemy, that we have been able to become a Western nation," a Foreign Office official said. "Our relationship with the Russians works so well—for both of us—that they don't even pay attention to us any more. It's a settled issue."

Finns do not boast of their political accomplishments, and they seldom complain. But on one political score they do feel maligned and misunderstood, and not by their enemies. For it is Finland's friends who speak of "Finlandization." Yet uttering the word in a Helsinki living room

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is like dropping Koo Stark's name at Buckingham Palace. The term was coined in the 1960s by Richard Lowenthal as a factual description of a nation that subordinates its foreign policy to the wishes of a dominating neighbor. The meaning was later expanded by Walter Laqueur to describe foreign and occasionally domestic policies that *anticipate* the wishes of such a neighbor. Zbigniew Brzezinski has attacked West German pacifists for promoting "self-Finlandization." In its latest incarnation, Finlandization has become shorthand for an ideal solution for the Soviet satellites. If the Poles could run their domestic affairs without Soviet interference, runs the dream-like scenario, they would be content to let Moscow run their foreign affairs. In all contexts, Finns object to the term. "We are a model for no one," Matti Kohva, a spokesman for Finnish commerce, snapped. "Just for Finns."

FINLAND'S TRADE with the Soviet Union illustrates its knack for turning a bad deal into a good one. The rules were imposed by the Russians—along with a huge reparations bill—at the close of World War II. Trade would be essentially a barter system whereby the Soviets exchanged crude oil for an equal value of Finnish manufactured goods. Since the Finns' main product at that time was lumber—which Russia also had in abundance—they were forced to industrialize, quickly becoming exporters of simple wood-related products such as papermaking machines and prefabricated houses. Today they specialize in wood jewelry, portable saunas, and above all ships capable of navigating freezing waters. Of the eighty-seven ships now under Finnish construction, seventy-four are destined for Soviet ports.

It took Kekkonen's political know-how in the '60s to turn Finland's trade westward. He earned political credit in Moscow by never reneging on a Soviet trade deal, and in 1964, presumably with Moscow's approval, he signed a trade agreement with the Common Market. Today Finland produces two-thirds of the oil rigs sunk into the North Sea by England and Norway. There are even Finnish-made rigs in Texas.

As the Soviet appetite for Finnish products has increased, Moscow has sought to "sell" Finland more than crude oil. Two of its four nuclear energy plants came from the Soviet Union. Asked about their quality, an industry spokesman responded carefully, "Well, it's not bad at all, provided you supply them with certain equipment. And of course, give them time—yes, plenty of time."

Finns protest that the West exaggerates the degree of Finnish economic dependence on the Soviet Union. "The leverage works both ways," Olavi Mattila, a former trade minister and close associate of Kekkonen, told me. "I remember when Kekkonen in 1970 told Brezhnev that if he did not agree to a certain Finnish demand, he, Kekkonen, would have to resign. It was Brezhnev who gave in that time. You see, that's what those five-year trade negotiations are really all about. Trade, yes. But each man also takes the measure of the other. If Koivisto is as tough as Kekkonen, we'll do all right."

The challenge to the freedom of Finland's media has been considerable. The principal inhibition is Soviet Estonia, only forty miles to the south, where Finnish is understood and only a good antenna is required for Finnish TV to be received clearly. Yet Finns insist that their media, self-censored, are free and becoming more so.

"Estonia poses no problem for us," says a Finnish news producer, Jarmo Virmavirta. "Take the way we played the recent events in Poland. We portrayed Solidarity fairly. We included all the facts of the Soviet crackdown, for example. But we do not use charged words such as 'crackdown' or 'brutality.' We simply report the facts—arrests, martial law, and so on. Maybe ten years ago the Soviets would have objected. Today they've got too many troubles elsewhere." And an editorial writer confided, "If we must publish on a touchy subject, human rights in the Soviet Union for example, we'll reprint it from the Swedish newspapers. Or run it on an inside page."

Soon after Koivisto took office, Finnish television produced a ten-part series on the 1939-40 Winter War that included fictionalized scenes taking place in the Kremlin, where Stalin issued his ultimatum to Finland. "Nobody objected," the series producer said. "There was no call either from our president's office or from Moscow." He paused. "Could this have happened ten years ago? I doubt it."

"No, we haven't brought out Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag* in Finnish," the editor of an academic political journal told me. "But since we're a bilingual people, it's no problem. We simply imported the Swedish edition." Yet self-censorship bears its own price. In the atmosphere it produces, it becomes easy for hypocrisy and apathy to flourish, according to Carl-Gustav Lillius, a Finnish sculptor and intellectual. He warns, "A mentality of that kind entails a measure of corruption, detrimental to the spirit of national assertion."

NATIONAL ASSERTION is part of what the Finns call *sisu*. Literally, *sisu* means guts. It also means the tenacity with which Finns defend their Finnish ways. What worries some Finns is the possibility that their country may have escaped Russification only to lose its toughness to the comforts of success.

"Maybe our *sisu* has become our national myth," a young newspaper reporter, Leena Maalat, reflects. "But we do fight against the cushy life," she insists. "We don't put plumbing in our summer cottages, some fancy ones too, even when we can afford it. We draw well water and use the old outhouse. It reminds us to stay close to the realities."

It is not easy to discern whether Finnish conformity is a part of the social landscape or is produced by the overwhelming presence of their Soviet neighbor. No other country in Western Europe is so homogeneous. It is 94 percent Finnish, with a 6 percent Swedish minority, and, despite the wine-brick, onion-domed Orthodox church that dominates the Helsinki skyline, 93 percent Lutheran.

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Russian tourists, easily distinguishable by their baggy clothes, may be seen buying avariciously in the shops, while Soviet diplomats conspire contentedly in the lobbies of the major hotels. "Why do Russians feel so much at home here?" I ask my Finnish companion. "They look so comfortable."

"Why not?" He was perplexed by my question. "Russia is our neighbor. We have fought with her. And we have learned to live with her. Since we are a free country, why shouldn't the Russians relax in our hotels?" And then, as if remembering, he added. "You think because we have suffered so much at their hands that we hate them." He shook his head. "We don't trust them. Nor they us. But we Finns are a practical people. We leave the looking back to historians. We don't hate the Russians. We just deal with them—the way they are."

The Finns see no contradiction between getting along with the Soviets and maintaining a strong military defense. This is not an easy task, since treaty obligations to the Soviets limit Finland's armed forces to forty thousand troops. Yet this highly trained cadre, particularly well-grounded in warfare conditions of ice and snow, together with a rapidly mobilized reserve force of seven hundred thousand, could give formidable opposition to an enemy. The Finnish Army could not defeat the powerful neighbor—but it would probably be feisty enough to forestall occupation, as it did in 1940.

The Finnish government gently fuzzes the central issue of the European peace movement—the deployment of medium-range missiles. It emphasizes that security in Europe cannot be enhanced by an increase in armaments and gives its official blessing to the U.S.-Soviet negotiators in Geneva to avoid the deployment of any new weapons. When I asked politically minded Finns for their views on the peace movements in West Germany and in the Lowlands, they replied initially that it is not for them to give an opinion. But when pressed, they were disdainful. "These demonstrators do not seem to want to defend their countries," a Finn suggested. "Perhaps they do not know what it is they should defend." There are no "peaceniks" in Finland, I was told—many times.

Behind that disdain is a lingering anxiety. For interlaced with Finland's dual policy of independent neutrality and military preparedness is a profound sense of physical insecurity. The Finns' geography forces them to live with a tinge of fear as part of their everyday life. "What sets us apart from most other Scandinavians—and many Europeans—today," a prominent Finnish banker told me, "is this: we believe that fear of the Soviet Union is what keeps us alert. We don't fight the fear. We use it."

JOYCE LASKY SHUB

Joyce Lasky Shub is a Washington writer and foreign policy analyst.

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Part of a Special Issue of The New Republic. November 21, 1983.

James Wyeth

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The enemy of liberals, nature lovers, rock music—and himself.

THE WATT THAT WAS

BY ELEANOR RANDOLPH

I speak in black-and-white terms, without much gray in my life. I see problems without the complexity that is confusing to a lot of people. I solve problems and see things in simple terms.

—James Watt, interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, 1981.

IT WAS CLEAR from the beginning that this guy was going to have trouble in the nation's capital. He didn't smoke; he didn't drink, not even coffee; and, more important, he didn't compromise. That spacious middle ground where Washington does its work was, to him, a strange and hostile land. It was Sodom and Gomorrah, the mushy center soft with decades of political sin, and he came to town to save it, or, failing that, to scorn it. Whatever he did here as Secretary of the Interior, he had no plans to participate in the political process, with its give and take. Jim Watt planned to take.

In fact, he planned to take billions of tons of coal and millions of gallons of new oil from the federal lands, to open one billion acres off the shores of America to oil and gas exploration, to stem the slide of Western lands into the public domain—in short, to make America safe from a group he called the "special interests," which meant the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club. And as he rode into town, full of the righteousness of a religious fundamentalism that was intermingled with a conservative political bent, he saw himself as the savior of the United States of America or at least of the American West. And for such lofty goals, there was clearly no trading room. As he promised the forest industry in 1982: "Compromise is not in my vocabulary. I don't know what compromise is, and I'm not going to learn. Some people in this town can't deal with that, and as a consequence my usefulness will expire."

By the evening of October 9, when Watt finally announced that the time had come, eighteen days after making another of the "jokes" that even his best friends had come to realize were not very funny out there beyond the Republican boys' club, his usefulness as a cabinet officer had long since expired. He had been muffled, quieted, and hog-tied for well over a year. He was on a short leash and his name on anything of importance—a wilderness bill, a coal-leasing plan, an increase in park fees—meant certain political death. He was hanging on by the right wing and he might have stayed on, doing crosswords in his big, plush office at the Interior Department and speaking to ultraconservative believers about how God wanted them to fix America, except that he couldn't help letting the real Jim Watt slip out and offend people, especially people who might at some point be persuaded to vote Republican.

In many ways, he was a political throwback to a hard, rural American West where people settled in clusters and disliked anyone who was odd and different or even lived in the next town. With the ways of Wheatland, Wyoming, strapped to him like a six-gun, Watt came to Washington full of indignation about the effete Harvard intellectuals who run this country with little regard for the people who push a small mining claim or go out in the snow to find a stray sheep. In spite of the fact that Watt had been in Washington before and knew how to manipulate the paperwork in this city, he was politically inept. He often could not make a joke without offending everybody in the room who did not agree with him. He had little of the natural ease and diplomacy that oils this town, and he left a wake of offense where another person would have made converts. At an oil and gas meeting in the fall of 1981, for example, Watt shared the platform with then Secretary of Energy James Edwards. They were supposed to joke and backslap—an art Edwards knew well as a former governor of South Carolina—and trade gentle barbs about the Energy Department and the Interior Department. But Watt couldn't seem to manage it. At one point, he answered a question to both men by saying: "Well, I'm not a politician like Jim here, so I guess I'll just have to tell the truth." Edwards looked stunned, and the audience of well-dressed businessmen gasped and grimaced at each other.

Watt often made enemies out of people who might have been only adversaries. The most obvious case was Representative Morris Udall, Democrat of Arizona, an easy-going man who has fans and personal friends on both sides of the aisle in Congress. Watt and Udall began with a disagreement about policies but exchanged jokes privately. For example, after Udall said putting Watt in charge of Interior was like letting a vampire run the blood bank, Watt signed a note to Udall as "Count Dracula." That was all in good fun, and maybe Watt also thought it was amusing the day he sat down to lunch with David Broder of *The Washington Post* and boasted that he had reined in Udall and his Interior Committee by threatening to stop a water

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Eleanor Randolph, of the Washington bureau of the *Los Angeles Times*, covered James Watt for two years.

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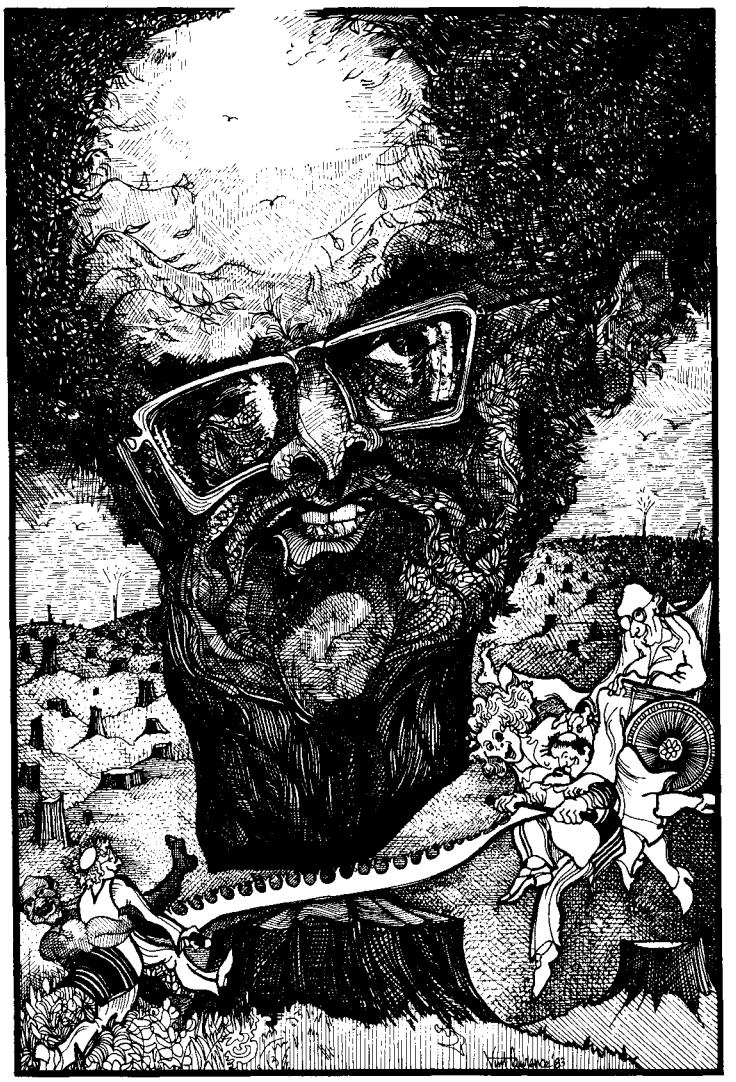
project in Tucson. Watt told Broder that when he met with Udall he said, "Mo Udall, you drain my batteries, and I can't get my personal energies rebuilt to think about things like the Tucson aqueduct." Maybe Watt thought it was funny and maybe a few of the readers of *The Washington Post* thought it was funny, but it had been a private conversation about a private understanding, and Watt's blabbing about it got Udall teed off. The next day, when he'd cooled down, Udall said: "I continue to be amazed at the Secretary's increasingly frequent compulsion to pick a fight and his regular public proclamations about how tough and mean he is." That was Mo Udall trying to tell Watt it wasn't the way you do business.

In the face of such hints, which may have been too subtle or perhaps simply dismissed as one-sided, Watt continued to believe he was right, which is not unusual in Washington. The difference was that he believed the other side was not merely wrong, it was un-American.

His most famous comment, also a "joke" in a collection that was more Joe McCarthy than Joe Miller, was made in California in 1981, when he said, "I never use the words Democrats and Republicans; it's liberals and Americans." See, liberals aren't Americans—get it?

Had that been a mere aberration in Watt's monologue, it would have been easily forgotten, but his speeches were riddled with damnations for the other side. It was like some verbal hiccough that came on him when he spoke to friendly groups—an involuntary response to the audiences of people who loved him, saw him as their Tom Mix riding into the city of black hats and bureaucratic desperados.

He had just such an audience at the Chamber of Commerce on September 21. Looking out at a sea of friendly faces, Watt boasted that his coal advisory commission, required by a Congress worried that Watt was selling coal at fire-sale prices, had "every kind of mix you can have. I have a black, I have a woman, two Jews and a cripple."



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

That line is destined to remain one of the most memorable pronouncements of the Reagan years. Had Watt used a less brutal term than "cripple"—"handicapped person," say—he might have ridden out the storm. In fact, though, there was another, nastier comment in the same address. Watt was explaining how upset he was with the California delegation after one member said that many Californians don't want oil rigs within fifty miles of the Big Sur coast. "That's what the Secretary of Interior has to deal with," he said, shaking his head in disbelief. "Where is the concern for this country? Where is the determination to defend freedom throughout the world?" In Watt's view, questioning the need for oil rigs off Monterey, even at a time of oil glut, is unpatriotic.

Someday, when political scholars look at the Reagan Presidency, they will cite Jim Watt as a classic confrontational politician. The art of confrontational politics, when practiced well, involves demanding the whole sow when you'll really settle for a rasher of bacon—figuring all along that you might get lucky and snag a whole ham. It means intimidating the opposition, bullying the press, baiting the Congress, silencing those who wring their hands and argue that this may not be a prudent way of doing things. It's a short-term operation, because the list of enemies grows and eventually one must leave.

In many ways, Watt followed this script. He hammered the opposition, he fired those who expressed dissent or concern, he loosened the rules for private use of public land, and he reorganized the department. One of his chief legacies was the creation of a whole new bureaucratic arm, the "Minerals Management Service," which is a kind of intradepartmental lobby for the mining interests. But he shocked the environmentalists into a frenzy of activity that had not been seen from some of the groups in years. The National Wildlife Federation, for example, the largest and most Republican of the groups, suddenly found itself in the center of a political tug-of-war; it polled its 4.5 million members, more than half of whom had voted for Reagan,

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and decided to ask their President to get rid of his Secretary of the Interior.

Watt laid out plans that most moderates saw as outlandish, even greedy. He stated that he planned to offer virtually the entire coastline of America for exploratory oil and gas leases—explaining that he wanted the marketplace, not the Interior Department, to pick the sites for their rigs. In California, the reaction was swift and angry when Watt reopened areas off the Northern California coast shortly after he took office. It was a classic case of confrontational politics run aground, because within days the opposition had organized against him. Some of that opposition was so vehement that Watt began taking two beefy Park Service policemen around with him as bodyguards.

But each time Watt came back with a repackaged plan for California, it was rejected and the sales were delayed. The latest Watt plan involved dropping lease sales for four key basins—but the fine print added that all other underwater lands in the federal domain would be considered for potential leases. One indignant environmentalist said that Watt was trying to "spare the holes and lease the donuts."

TO UNDERSTAND why Watt had so much trouble outside of his Rocky Mountain territory, why he seemed so weird by bi-coastal American standards, it is necessary to understand where he came from. Watt was reared in the tiny Wyoming town of Wheatland, a place frozen in amber decades ago—the 1890s plus electricity and TV. People in towns like Wheatland think of themselves as pioneers, their off-road vehicles a modern substitute for covered wagons. As one resident explained it, "A man came here and staked out what he could defend. Nobody from the government helped him and nobody got in his way. A lot of people still feel that's the way it should be." In this raw part of the country, where you control the wilderness or "it eats you alive," as Senator Alan Simpson, Republican of Wyoming, has said, you can still find proud people who boast that "Wyoming is what America was."

Watt's parents had a Westerner's view of Washington—a rattlesnake pit of a place that is full of people "crazy for socialism." Bill Watt told Robert Jones of the *Los Angeles Times* shortly after the younger Watt took office in 1981: "I never voted for a winning President until Eisenhower ran. The anger would come in great bursts of passion after every election. You would see the New Deal, the left wing taking over. You could see it attracting the teachers in public schools. They were idealists and they would teach it to the kids. People seemed to want everything handed to them on a platter. Well, I resented it, and I guess James picked up his philosophy from me."

As the twig was bent, so grew James Watt. He was smart and clean, a good boy who preferred to play "church" with himself as the preacher. It is not corny in Wheatland to love the flag, to talk about America, and to pray in public. For Watt, it all folded into his brand of Republicanism—less government in Washington, especially a government run by loose-thinking, loose-living leftover Roosevelt liberals. Public lands were O.K. if they were parks or preserves worthy of a postcard, but the 700 million acres that include desert scrub and what some Interior officials privately call "trashlands" should be given a chance to boom. As he put it last year: "A sheep pasture will become an industrial site. Desert lands will be used for hotels and resorts." It was the kind of comment that went over well in Wyoming but tended to scare the bejesus out of people elsewhere. He was stepping on the urban American dream: people who live in a two-bedroom apartment who like to think that out there is an unspoiled plain roaming with buffalo.

WATT'S RELIGION also scared some people—much the way Jimmy Carter's born-again Christianity made many Democrats nervous in 1976. At one congressional hearing, Watt said that he supported saving natural reserves for later generations, but added, in words that many found chilling, "I do not know how many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns."

Only Watt really knows whether he truly believes this sort of thing or not. But friends say that he can be a mesmerizing preacher and at church services he can bring doubters around, raising their hands to join the flock and accept Jesus Christ as their personal savior. An old friend of Watt's from Wyoming, James Dinnel, said: "James is a special person in his relationship with Christ. He has the gift of speaking in tongues, and there have been times in prayer meetings with James when people have been healed."

Watt brought the pulpit with him on the campaign trail as he stumped for the Republican Party and the Reagan Administration the last two years. He could give a barnburner of a speech, but he could also make his audiences of Chamber of Commerce members or Rotarians a little uncomfortable. In Fairbanks, Alaska, for example, Watt, who followed several politicians telling jokes and talking the day's rhetoric, launched into a ringing sermon on the hellfires of energy dependence and the salvation of his leasing plans. As he closed, he boomed over the huge hall: "I have seen the heart of Alaska. It was from a small group of people who came up to me and said, 'Thank you for what you're doing' and I didn't understand where they were coming from until I looked into their eyes." He paused, waited a second to make his final point and then said forcefully: "While their lips said 'thank you,' their eyes said 'God bless America.' "

Having God on his side and against his political opponents caused problems for Watt, of course. People made fun of him. He admitted privately that nothing hurt him like those comments about his religion, nothing made him so angry. And if he sometimes seemed vulnerable and dazed that the criticism was so personal, he failed to realize how often he dished it out, how personal his own vendettas were.

For example, Watt said of the people he got rid of when

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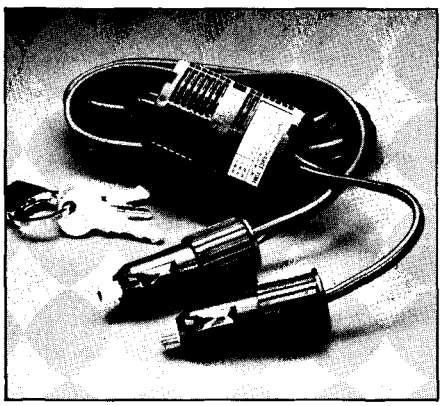

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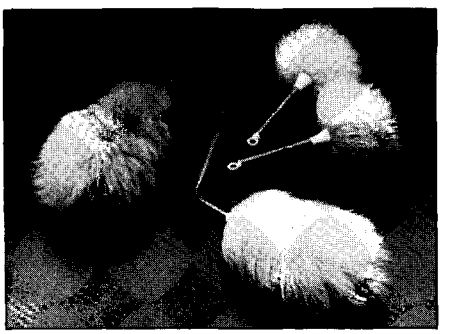

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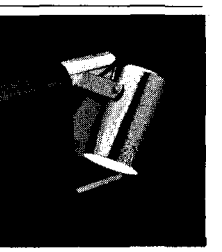

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he took office: "We cleaned every one of them out and then we started appointing good people." (He said of those days: "I determined in my heart that I would not leave until I brought that bureaucracy under control. I fired fifty-one lawyers and I loved it. I looked for men and women who would sell their souls for America." (Or maybe just lease them.)

IF HE HAD trouble with the press, consider his way of dealing with it. At the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International in Detroit, he said that people should not believe what they read in the papers because "those enemies of truth will distort anything they can to destroy this country." If Democrats and environmentalists were eager to jump on him, consider what he said about them: "They want America to fail, so that they can grow. That's sick." He also accused environmentalists, whom he referred to more than once as "left-wing cultists," of using their issues as a "tool to achieve a greater objective"—namely, "centralized planning and control of the society." This time he was talking to *Business Week*. "Look what happened to Germany in the 1930s," he went on. "The dignity of man was subordinated in Russia. These are the forces that this thing can evolve into."

Maybe all Watt meant was that he believes liberals try to use the federal government too much to get things done, while he and Reagan want the power closer to home. Centralized government, he believes, is dangerous because it tempts leaders to become dictators. But in the process of explaining that view, he managed to compare environmentalists to Nazis and Communists. It was at this point that former Senator Gaylord Nelson, chairman of the Wilderness Society, declared, "The Secretary has gone bonkers."

Indeed, there were many people in Washington who began to think that Jim Watt was a little odd. One of his aides said Watt began increasingly to blow up in private meetings, railing about the press and about how he had become a martyr for his religion and his politics. If a reporter became the subject of such a tirade, his or her name went on an unwritten list. Phone calls were not to be returned, unless they came when the employee was safely at home. Doug Baldwin, Watt's acerbic press secretary, once told a group of public information specialists that *The Washington Post* was at the top of that week's list. "I want you to treat the *Post* as if it had terminal herpes," Baldwin said.

One of the strangest comments Watt has made this year concerned the victims of the Holocaust. After meeting with survivors of death camps and their relatives, he told a reporter that he understood their plight because "we've had religious persecution by the media and the special interest groups." Requests to Watt's office for specific instances produced the response that he was talking about critical fundraising letters from the Sierra Club, articles questioning his pious nature, and a fairly large stack of political cartoons, including one that shows Watt carrying a placard that reads JESUS CHRIST IS COMING—CUT DOWN THE TREES. Perhaps the cartoon was in poor taste. Possibly it was even offensive from Watt's point of view. But it's a long way from Dachau and Auschwitz.

In many ways, Watt was a misfit—not only among the Eastern elitists he so disliked in Washington but also in his native West. While Westerners understood what Watt was trying to do as Interior Secretary, knew that the Interior Department had become a cranky landlord keeping them from building roads in areas so remote that they had seldom seen a transcontinental jet flying overhead, he was not at home with these people. He was a lawyer; he had spent four years in Washington working as an assistant to former Senator Milward Simpson, Republican of Wyoming, then at the Interior Department under Nixon and Ford. When he moved back to the West it was to Denver, as a lawyer-lobbyist for Joseph Coors's anti-environmentalist Mountain States Legal Association. Watt was not like the sportsmen and women in the Rocky Mountains who do their jobs so that they can fish or hike or run their snowmobiles through the forests.

IN AUGUST 1981, I traveled with Watt to Alaska, to which he had been invited by the U.S. Park Service to engage in some "biological stream sampling," otherwise known as fishing. Watt was decked out uncomfortably in waders, and was forced to stand in a trout stream that every year people pay thousands of dollars to find. He looked uneasy—a fledgling sportsman trying to be a good sport. But it was not his thing, and he explained later that he felt fly fishing was an elite sport, the easy business of the rich who weren't casting for the family's dinner. Likewise, Watt showed himself to be a decent sport but a poor shot in Lander, Wyoming, in 1982 where he went for the One Shot Antelope Hunt. When he aimed his gun at the game, most likely spied for him by an aide, he missed the first shot, and he paid the price. He was forced to dress up like a squaw and dance away his shame for not bringing home the dinner. He is an odd man out—a bureaucrat who disdains the great bureaucratic mecca in Washington, an indoorsman who counts his home in the West, a defender of cowboys who probably hasn't been in a saloon in his life.

Watt's bloopers and gaffes in Washington will be missed. There will be no one to suggest that the Beach Boys bring out the wrong element; no one to use the Indians as an example of "the failures of socialism"; no one to offend a new ethnic group or voting bloc each time he gives an address in public. In the end, it was the Republicans who did in Jim Watt. It was a logical outcome, since only the Republicans had a motive. Jim Watt will be missed by the Democrats, by the environmentalists, by those people who can put Watt's name on an envelope and get people to send it back with a $10 bill. The ultimate and often unspoken fear for these groups is that Watt's replacement will be quiet, likable, well schooled in the ways of Washington. A smooth Jim Watt is their nightmare—a man who will not have to rape the environment, because he can seduce it instead.

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An Open Letter to Democrats and Republicans on

The Structural Crisis of the American Economy

Despite much speculation about national economic recovery, as many as a million workers, by conservative estimates, are not likely to be returning to their jobs in America's basic industries this fall.

But despite the great costs—human and economic—this will exact, neither of our major political parties has responded to this crisis with adequate concern. Fashionable Republican doctrine holds that the problems of our basic industries will in time be corrected by the invisible hand of the marketplace—if they deserve to be corrected at all. The Democrats profess great sympathy for those affected by industrial decline. But, as a practical matter, the Democratic presidential candidates have neglected the issues and constituencies involved in favor of pursuing the affluent, educated social activists who continue to dominate the Democratic Party's presidential nominating procedure. Thus an economic crisis now threatens to become a political crisis—one which could be deep, lasting and very painful.

What we describe here as basic industries—steel, auto, rubber, apparel and more—have long been the foundation of the American economy. But they have been much more than that. From World War II through the mounting threat from the Soviet Union that followed, these industries were the world's great arsenal of democracy. They still are today. Employment in these industries, moreover, has been the basis of a great democratic experience in our country:

- It provided social and economic opportunity for people of widely diverse backgrounds.
- It was the source of the first mass prosperity the world has known.
- It provided the basis for the rise of an independent, democratic trade union movement which enhanced the freedom and the dignity of all Americans, and became an unequalled force in building a free labor movement worldwide.
- It permitted the establishment of families and communities which have been bulwarks of decency, responsibility, hard work, and hope—an often celebrated embodiment of America's values.

We do not believe that America can allow these industries—and the security and community which they undergird—to be shattered by blind and perhaps temporary trends in corporate strategy, financial markets, or world trade. In the crisis of these industries and communities, government is not really the problem; in fact, government must become part of the solution. We do not ask that government sustain these industries and communities, regardless of the public expense. But we do believe that government must take measures to assure that whatever structural changes must be made in our economy proceed with due consideration for our long-term economic needs, for our national security needs, and for the valuable human communities which depend upon these industries.

What, precisely, such measures should entail must be a matter for careful study and debate. We are persuaded, however, that these questions require government at the highest levels to assume a serious measure of responsibility for focusing public concern upon the problems, for organizing discussion of the measures to be taken, and for recommending to the private and public sectors the steps required to avoid unnecessary harm and hardship.

In the past year, two very different issues of public policy have been resolved with commendable results through the efforts of specially-appointed, high-level public commissions: the National Commission on Social Security Reform, and the Scowcroft Commission on Strategic Forces.

We urge the President and Congress to designate a national leadership commission to seek emergency measures to prevent an irresponsible collapse of America's basic industries. Such a commission should include, in addition to the leaders of both political parties, representatives of labor, business, and the communities and regions which are in crisis. It should be adequately financed and staffed, and should report its proposals within six months to the President, Congress, and the public.

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

People in Groups

This year's Paul Mazursky picture is by Lawrence Kasdan. A Mazursky picture (e.g., *Alex in Wonderland, Blume in Love, An Unmarried Woman, Tempest*) is one that bravely faces some social or psychological problems of our time—and that's it. The picture faces them; then, after a while, it stops facing them, and

The Big Chill
(Columbia)

that's the end. Mazursky didn't originate this line of honestly spurious films, but he has become the pre-eminent practitioner, and now he has a scion.

Kasdan made his directing debut with *Body Heat* (TNR, December 9, 1981) after working as a scriptwriter. Perhaps throwing scraps to future authors of critical tomes about him, he goes from *Body Heat* to *The Big Chill*. The first film was a tepid try for stylized sensuality in Florida. The second is a differently but equally tepid try for a societal microcosm in South Carolina.

Of course the film has actors and a cinematographer and settings and editing, but all of them are less important—and would be, whatever their quality—than the script. Some films triumph over their scripts: John Ford made many such. Some, however, are fundamentally writers' films. This is not necessarily derogation: I think it true of most of Bergman and Rohmer. And when it is true, the film depends very heavily on what the author has to say, in the most specific sense of the word. Kasdan has, in sum, nothing to say.

The vacuity is even more oppressive in this particular sort of writer's film. It's the sort in which the author gathers a group of contemporaries, and, through their interactions at that gathering, attempts to lay bare their society's soul. Kasdan, with his script collaborator, Barbara Benedek, had at least two antecedents in film. First, the last decade's lot of European pictures about groups: for examples, *Vincent François Paul and the Others* and *We All Loved Each Other So Much*. (Such films often start with scenes involving small children, to show that the adults whose taints will be revealed are good at heart. *The Big Chill* begins with a small boy being bathed by his father.) Second, more especially, John Sayles's *Return of the Secaucus Seven*, which is a group picture about a reunion, some years later, of 1960s political activists. This is the locus of Kasdan's group film.

Obvious as are his film's type and derivation, I had some expectation. It arose out of a persistent belief in rationality. It's difficult to assume from the start that a writer is *not* rational, that he would launch still another film in this form with not much more than the form itself in mind, that he would choose to treat a group of refugees from the 1960s with virtually nothing to add to the subject, with no greater intent than one more use of the lozenge-shaped script: the quiet beginning, the swelling as characters and problems accrete, the diminution to a quiet ending. But my faith in Kasdan's rationality, in this regard, was disappointed (though I know it will persist, to be disappointed again). Kasdan does no more than haul forth yet once more a collection of sellouts and compromisers—doggedly defiant or cynically craven, all with their college-years glow now greatly dimmed—put them through their generically typical paces, then shove them away to wait until the next writer-ringmaster hauls them forth to put them through their paces once again. And, again, the ostensible point will be that their paces are a comment on our times.

This is Mazurskyism in essence: the belief that to raise problems is to deal with them. (It's a belief that centers on the group picture but also includes others.) At first view, Mazurskyism may look like Hollywood tailoring: a grandstand play for serious regard by tackling serious subjects, then avoiding the serious consequences of those subjects by neat platitudes and neat finishes. In *The Big Chill* campus idealism and Vietnam and sexual liberality are the core subjects. (A wife consents to her husband's impregnating a friend who wants a child.) Love gets mentioned a good deal—agape, not eros—because this group has gathered for the funeral of one of their number who killed himself for causes unknown. And all these big subjects, plus others, prove to be merely a species of chic, of décor, not the cause of any burning new insights in Kasdan.

Possibly this insufficiency may look like trimming, like a pullback from ideational consequences—assuming Kasdan to be capable of them—because of big-budget nervousness. Of course Hollywood, with its current average budget of $12 million, isn't eager for intellectual or social risks in its scripts. But Mazurskyism is not a film monopoly: it has long been operative in our theater, not least in Off Broadway, sometimes far Off, where budget considerations are much less strangulating. The vacuous group play has an extensive history in our theater: Philip Barry's *Hotel Universe* dates from 1930. And we have lately had a number of vacuous group plays about 1960s refugees: for instance, Lanford Wilson's *The Fifth of July*.

The lineage of the group play goes back to Chekhov (although a case can

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The Grey Fox. In 1903, an aging ex-con is inspired by an early film, *The Great Train Robbery*, to follow suit. Adventure, charm, humanity.

Pandora's Box/Diary of a Lost Girl. These G. W. Pabst-Louise Brooks Films, both made in 1929, are pungent period pieces.

WarGames. A high-school computer freak taps into the NORAD system. Scarily credible comedy, speedily paced.

Zelig. Woody Allen half-does it again. A very bright idea for a social comedy, about a man who changes personae to please people; but after the idea, no film.

SK

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be made for Turgenev's *A Month in the Country*). To some degree, many great artists leave curses as well as blessings. The Chekhov curse has been the seeming ease of his form, which has resulted in the imitation of that form by lesser writers, all the way from Gorky (whose plays are down the slope from Chekhov) to Kasdan. I don't impute insincerity to the American playwrights and screenwriters in that long line. Quite the reverse: I indict them for sincerity, for believing that the sincerity is enough, especially in a drama-film world riddled with insincerities. They are sincerely moved by the dilemmas and agonies they see around them: and are moved to write about those matters sincerely, without pausing to consider whether they have any insights to add to what has already been perceived. This charge, the inadequacy of sincerity, applies as much to Mazursky and Kasdan, writing for the screen, as to Wilson, writing for Off Broadway.

The result with such films is just what it is with comparable plays: not enough. There's no reason on earth why any intelligent person, moderately sensible of the zeitgeist, should see *The Big Chill*. It does no more than chew over what is already familiar. Kasdan and his fellows are not obligated to solve our problems; Chekhov didn't solve anything. But we have the right to expect insights at least equivalent to our own, and Kasdan provides none.

HIS DIRECTION, in purely cinematic terms, is only modestly competent, except for a witty series of dissolves that link some breakfast scenes. His actors are, as noted, more than usually limited by the script in this case, but Kasdan hasn't helped the film with his casting. William Hurt, who was in *Body Heat*, is once again supposed to be charismatic—this time as a pop psychologist who pops pills—and once again he suggests the surreal image of a side of beef from which mushy Muzak gushes. Tom Berenger, as an unhappy TV star, is a fuzzy carbon copy of Burt Reynolds. Glenn Close, afflicted with a hairdo that makes her look like a bewigged hen, is pallid as the housewife-hostess who, possibly because the character needed texture, suddenly turns out to be a practicing physician. Her husband, a proudly successful businessman, is Kevin Kline, who proves that his superficial work in *Sophie's Choice* was not a lapse. Some items on

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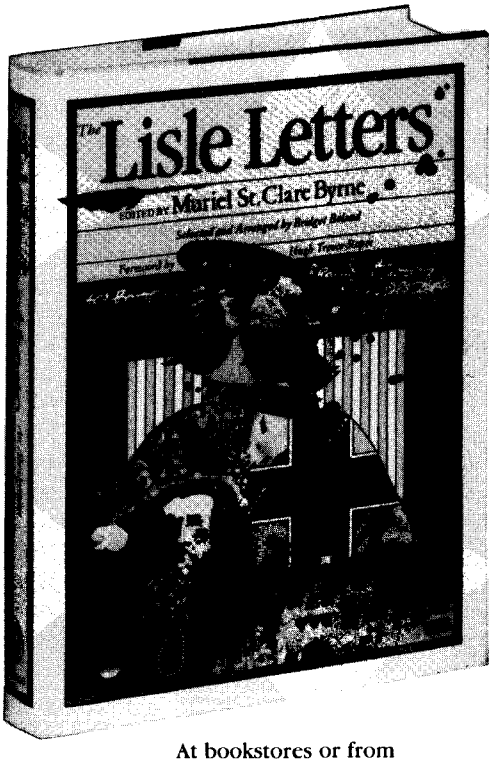

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the credit side: Jobeth Williams, who has an astonishing resemblance to the late Natalie Wood, is good as an unhappy wife who has long loved Berenger, and Mary Kay Place is all right as the woman who wants a baby. Jeff Goldblum's sardonic urban Jew would be amusing if it hadn't already become his shtick.

All of them, and a few others, discuss the condition and prospects of Hope in Our Time, and when they are finished discussing it, they and we go home. They and we should have stayed there.

TWO CHEERS FOR IRVING KRISTOL

Reflections of a Neoconservative: Looking Back, Looking Ahead by Irving Kristol

(Basic, 336 pp., $19.95)

If ten or so of the longer essays in this collection were to be published together under the name of a not particularly well-known professor, they would undoubtedly receive respectful attention. The author's stylistic fluency and elegance would be praised, as well as his command of the essay as a genre. The breadth of his interests—embracing cultural and moral concerns in the broad sense, political philosophy up to the close of the eighteenth century, and the place of economic thought and commercial activity itself in the larger scheme of things—would be remarked upon. His preference for old rather than new wisdom would certainly be noted and linked to his matter-of-factly conservative outlook, favoring stability over change, accepting the American Revolution but rejecting the French; he is fearful of the ideological passions unleashed by utopian visions, of the vagaries and restless discontents of "intellectuals," yet appreciative of the basic good sense of ordinary human beings.

The strong influence of such antimodernist thinkers as Leo Strauss and Hannah Arendt would be detected in several of the essays. So would the author's awareness of the fundamental conflict experienced by American conservatives between their nostalgic attraction to a stable pre-industrial social order and their recognition that acceptance of modern capitalism with its built-in drive to destroy tradition by promoting ceaseless material and technical transformations of daily life provides the only possible basis for a conservative politics. In this connection, the author refers both wistfully and hopefully to the mutual respect that Edmund Burke and Adam Smith felt for one another. One notices also his persistent tendency to speak approvingly of "commerce" and "commercial society," trade being of course as old as civilization, rather than of "technological progress" or "industrial society."

The author, however, is not a little-known academic but Irving Kristol, doyen of that intensely engaged political-intellectual movement known as "neoconservatism," regular columnist for *The Wall Street Journal*, consultant to a host of enterprises and foundations concerned with public policy, sometime adviser to Republican Presidents as well as to lesser politicians carrying that party's banners. The title of this collection, his third and largest, declares the presence of Kristol the partisan and publicist; also represented (especially in several essays reprinted from his first collection, now out of print) is Kristol the eighteenth-century moralist and the somewhat melancholy political philosopher "looking back" to the endangered eternal verities of Western civilization. That all these Kristols do not coexist in perfect congruity is something I suspect their creator knows full well.

Ten of the twenty-nine selections in this volume originally appeared as *Wall Street Journal* columns; several more were speeches or contributions to symposia for the American Enterprise Institute, often called the "neoconservative think-tank." There are also two autobiographical memoirs recounting Kristol's intellectual and ideological journey and several pieces grouped under the heading "Religion and the Jews" that appeared in *Commentary* over thirty years ago, long before "neoconservatism" could have existed even as a fugitive gleam in his eye. In short, this volume shows us, in contrast to Kristol's two previous collections, the "compleat Kristol."

Kristol expresses in the most recent piece in the book some disillusionment with the Reagan Administration. He complains that it increasingly resembles conventional Republican Administrations since the New Deal, despite the promise of something different and more dynamic aroused by Reagan's 1980 campaign. Kristol thinks that Reagan could have been another Theodore Roosevelt, for he shares TR's populist style and status as a political outsider. The likeness surely ends there: Roosevelt was a patrician *haut bourgeois* with a genuine contempt for vulgar money-grubbing big businessmen—for just the kinds of people whose company Ronald Reagan seeks and cherishes. TR wanted to use the powers of the federal government against "the trusts"; Reagan promised to "get the government off our backs" and approved tax relief for the corporate rich. Roosevelt tried to enforce the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, about which Kristol writes dismissively in tones reminiscent of Thurman Arnold and the younger John Kenneth Galbraith. Kristol defends and upholds corporate capitalism in a Schumpeterian spirit quite free from the "folkloristic" myths belabored by Arnold back in the 1930s.

YET, as the title of his second collection of essays announced, Kristol is able to muster only "two cheers for capitalism." He finds little to excite the political imagination in the cautious, managerial, cost-benefit conscious ways of the businessmen in politics who have for so long dominated the Republican Party. "All those Republicans with the hearts and souls of accountants," he calls them. His disappointment with the Reagan Administration is certainly not based on its failure to mount a more determined assault on the welfare state, for he accepts both the welfare state's desirability and permanence—that is, after all, what the "neo" in neoconservatism originally stood for. Nor does Kristol make a fetish of the free market, seeing it as the fount of all liberty, and

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most other good things as well, in the fashion of Friedmanite economists.

The result is that, leaving aside foreign policy, the content as distinct from the style of the more aggressive ideological defense of "liberal capitalism" called for by Kristol remains far from clear. To his credit, he does not shrink from asserting that what he wants is a more forceful ideology, in contrast to so many conservatives who piously insist that they have firm "principles" and that only the left is addicted to "ideology." Kristol wants to match "modern left-wing movements [which] have the immense advantage of being ideological in their essence." He wants to break with the prevailing pattern that only produces "conservative government as a tedious if necessary interregnum during which the excesses of the left are tidied up," a cycle that is "the basic rhythm of politics in all democratic societies, and it is a rhythm that inexorably moves these societies leftward."

I confess to having a certain intellectual investment in the notion of a "rhythm of democratic politics," including the view that a leftward drift is inherent in it. I confess also that I have begun to have some doubts about the persistence in the more advanced Western democracies of the underlying social and economic circumstances that have helped sustain this rhythm in the past, doubts recently strengthened by the decline of the British Labour Party. On the other hand, as Karl Mannheim argued over half a century ago, conservatism inevitably becomes articulate as a counter-ideology, defending the realities of the way people actually live in opposition to the future-oriented proposals of left-wing reformers and radicals. Under political democracy based on universal suffrage, politics is necessarily ideological. Thus there cannot be any such thing as a permanent "end of ideology," and conservatives are inescapably drawn into the battle if they wish to be political men; they cannot just point and bow reverently in the direction of the institutions they wish to conserve.

Kristol seems fully aware of all this. Yet his bias reveals itself in his reluctance to concede that protests against the continuing deprivations and injustices suffered by large numbers of people are endowed with legitimacy by democracy; that they become the foundation of a politics of the left which is the source of movement in the system. Even granting Kristol's criticism that left-wing ideas can rigidify into ideological shibboleths severed from any connection to the actual values and interests of the groups in whose name they are asserted, left politics are never simply the reflection of the wrongheaded ideas of utopian intellectuals.

Kristol himself was an active mocker and scoffer at conventional left-liberal prejudices back when he still thought of himself as a liberal, if a critical one, and long before the label "neoconservative" had even been coined by its enemies. I am not referring to his origins as an anti-Stalinist, shared as they are with others who have not followed his course, but to a skeptical and even provocative stance already in evidence when he was a junior editor of *Commentary* in the late 1940s. He remarks of this period: "I had never in my life been to Washington, D.C.; I had never seen a Congressman or Senator or high government official in the flesh; no agency of the American government had ever asked me for my opinion on *anything*." I cannot resist observing that these limitations, so amply overcome since, showed way back then. I remember arguing with Kristol about McCarthyism at the old *Commentary* offices in a loft on West 33rd Street. He was inclined to dismiss it as a specimen of uncouth and ephemeral demagoguery endemic to American politics and quite unworthy of the hostile attention lavished on it by liberal-left intellectuals. I agreed with him that McCarthyism was not a burgeoning fascist movement exploiting the "mass hysteria" of the American public. But through family associations with top people in the State Department and the diplomatic community in Washington where I had grown up, I was aware of the havoc wrought by Senator McCarthy in these circles: the pervasive anxiety, the unjustly ruined careers, even a few real and suspected suicides. Although I felt out-argued, I also thought that Kristol's judgment was too much in bondage to his quarrels with the New York liberal intellectual milieu in which he moved.

Kristol's iconoclastic role has been possible because of the existence since at least the 1930s of a left subculture centered in the better universities and

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in metropolitan intellectual circles. Like all cultures, this one has provided its adherents with an entire set of unspoken presuppositions, ritual pieties and taboos, and pretensions to special virtue and insight into the nature of things. Despite their occupational commitment to critical (including self-critical) intelligence, many people live so comfortably enclosed within their basic assumptions that they are quite incapable of responding rationally when their beliefs are challenged. Criticism is like a knife cutting through soft butter; the critic is tempted to continual provocations and displays of derisive wit, to playing the game of *épater le bourgeois* in reverse, as it were. The young William Buckley was able to launch an instant career as a television debater back in the 1950s by deftly exposing the ignorance and self-righteousness of various official spokesmen for the liberalism of the day. (I still remember a hilarious program in 1952 on which he challenged two gentlemen wearing saucer-size Stevenson buttons to come up with the name of a single person whom Senator McCarthy had falsely charged with being a Communist. After hemming and hawing for what seemed like ten minutes, one of them mentioned General Marshall, enabling Buckley to point out that McCarthy had said that Marshall was stupid and therefore a dupe of the Communists rather than a Communist himself.)

This political culture was never pro-Communist in any meaningful sense, nor even committed to "socialism." Yet it was ruled by the sentiment that "left is where the heart is," and uneasy when confronted with principled and informed anti-Communism or sharply critical assessments of socialism as an ideal. Combining themes from Schumpeter and Trilling, Kristol claims that since the 1960s this left subculture has become the dominant ideology of a New Class based on the universities, the media, and the public service, a class which is locked in battle with the business community and the bourgeois ethos on which American society has always been based. From the vantage point of 1983 he appears to exaggerate. Moreover, I wonder whether the situation as he describes it is really as unique and historically unprecedented as he suggests. But even if it is, and his description is fully accurate, so what? Tension between the intelligentsia and the business world is evidence of genuine pluralism, and attests to the absence of that "unification of the elites" which Raymond Aron once saw as the hallmark of Soviet-style totalitarianism. One might wish that both the intellectuals and the businessmen were a bit more urbane and farsighted and recognized the value of mediators between them; but that is exactly Kristol's own present and self-chosen role, isn't it?

Still, though all primarily polemical orientations suffer from a certain narrowness, Kristol's long past as a left-baiter saves him from the excesses and obsessions of some of his fellow neoconservatives, who saw the light only in the past decade. Kristol is obviously able to maintain friendly personal relations with people who disagree with him politically, and even at his most provocative he is free of personal nastiness. These traits are indisputably lacking in several other prominent neoconservatives, who are mirror images of the leftist zealots against whom they initially directed so much of their polemical energy. Lately one observes writers for *Commentary* and *The New Criterion* displaying much venom toward firmly anti-Communist liberals and social democrats who have done little more than refuse to share the exacerbated sense of cultural and political crisis expressed by the editors and regular contributors to these journals. Kristol's greater civility doubtless has roots in his character, but it surely owes something to the influence of the premodern philosophers of civilization, including Adam Smith, discussed in his longer essays.

DENNIS WRONG

Dennis Wrong, professor of sociology at New York University, is on the editorial board of *Partisan Review* and *Dissent*. He is the author of *Power: Its Forms, Bases & Uses* (Harper & Row).

A GENIUS AND HIS GHOSTS

My Last Sigh: The Autobiography of Luis Buñuel translated by Abigail Israel

(Knopf, 256 pp., $15.95)

Only days after receiving this book to review, there came news of Luis Buñuel's death. Gone in Mexico, before I had opened the book or given its sigh a chance. Some people are always drawing a razor across our path to remind us. So as I read this short, lovely, insolent variation on a life, I found a suitable postcard of Louise Brooks—all silk, leg and flagrant wish-you-were-here—to mark my place and to furnish Buñuel with dreams. (Where is the harm? He is dead and she is utterly flat.)

Buñuel would appreciate those two intimations of the occult, coincidence and superstition. He might even have directed my attention to a further coincidence, that Miss Brooks, that raw blade of *femme fatale*, was another LB. "We should have worked together," he could have sighed. And in a sense they did. For anarchists, *amants fous*, and surrealists, all shining in hopelessness, inhale the same air and breathe it out with a blast of amused fatalism.

My last sigh, Buñuel promised, a little disgruntled because death was being tardy while he itched to get himself into that nothingness where ghosts, chance imagination, and immortality thrive. For fifteen years he had been announcing every film as his last—for he was going deaf, crotchety, and forgetful, riddled with small failings:

> The diagnosis couldn't be simpler: I'm an old man, and that's all there is to it. I'm only happy at home following my daily routine: wake up, have a cup of coffee, exercise for half an hour, wash, have a second cup of coffee, eat something, walk around the block, wait until noon. My eyes are weak, and I need a magnifying glass and a special light in order to read. My deafness keeps me from listening to music, so I wait, I think, I remember, filled with a desperate impatience and constantly looking at my watch.

Boredom and impatience, sitting as close together as an endlessly green apple and a Magritte bowler-hat head—it

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is the perpetual surrealist juxtaposition of unconsciousness and the marvelous. It is the momentary twitch in so many of Buñuel's films, when we are not sure whether a character is daunted by a fly landing on his hand or by sin eclipsing mankind—or even whether the character is the insect. More than any other director, Buñuel let us see awful pregnancy in familiar objects and warped destiny in fatuous occasions. He combined the lucidity of an entomologist with the sleeplessness of a thundery siesta. So often regarded as intimidating (that razor was never forgotten—its threat lasted), he was also a maker of deadpan farce, the sort in which significance gives up the ghost; and so the ghost goes free.

It's no great wonder then that there isn't very much organized life in *My Last Sigh*. As Buñuel admits, he'd be content with twenty-two hours of dreaming in any day, and just two of gin and small talk. There's a plausible outline, the kind of dossier to impress Franco's secret police—born in Calanda, in Aragon, in 1900, raised in Saragossa, a student in Madrid, a layabout in Paris, then those bombs, *Un Chien Andalou* and *L'Age d'Or*, calls to murder, tangos of disappointment, the first films that consciously reached out for the unconscious rapture of dreams.

AS IF HE guessed that those two were enough for most careers, Buñuel the drifter and idler stopped making films. You can't have that many dreams without great expanses of sleep. Between *Las Hurdes* (1932), a caustic documentary on the irredeemable plight of some Spanish peasants, and 1946, he did not direct a film. Take that, golden years of maturity! Instead, he lived in Spain and France, sat around in cafés with brilliant rascal friends, produced a few movies, and, after the Civil War, slipped off to America where he was briefly employed by the Museum of Modern Art, only to be bumped from that post on the word of onetime friend and collaborator, Salvador Dali, that he was an atheist. He also supervised the dubbing into Spanish of Hollywood pictures, watching to see that the hidden Castilian fitted approximately with the fishy lisp of Peter Lorre. It sounds like a story of inspired waste and humiliation, placidly, even lovingly, accepted. You can see Fernando Rey playing Buñuel, the distinguished outcast, perversely pursuing

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1953–IKE order reaffirms FBI's responsibility to ferret out employee disloyalty and makes it mandatory that any accused person be immediately dismissed and reinstated only at the discretion of the agency head. (see July 2)

1961–JFK tells the American Newspapers Publishers Association before publishing to ask not only "is it news?" but also "is it in the interest of national security?"

1970–*N.Y. Daily News* reports that acting FBI director Gray destroyed Watergate evidence at Ehrlichman's request. (see Oct. 15)

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IN THE WESTERN NIGHT

1. *The Irreparable*

First, I was there where unheard
harmonies create the harmonies

we hear—

then I was a dog, sniffing
your crotch.

I asked you why you
were here; your answer was your beauty.

I said I was in need. You said
that the dead

rule and confuse our steps—

that if I helped you cut your skin
deeply enough

that, at least, was IRREPARABLE . . .

This afternoon, the clouds
were moving so swiftly—

massed above the towers, rushing.

2. *In My Desk*

Two cigarette butts—
left by you

the first time you visited my apartment.
The next day

I found them, they were still there—

picking one up, I put my lips where
yours had been . . .

•

Our not-love is like a man running down
a mountain, who, if he dares to try to stop,

falls over—
my hands wanted to touch your hands

because we had hands.

•

I put the two cigarette butts
in an envelope, carefully

taping shut the edges.
At first, the thin paper of the envelope

didn't stop

the stale smell of tobacco . . .
Now the envelope is in my desk.

3. *Two Men*

The man who does not know himself, who
does not know his affections that his actions

speak but that he does not
acknowledge,

who will SAY ANYTHING

and lie when he does not know that he is
lying because what he needs to believe is true

must indeed
be true,

THIS MAN IS STONE . . . NOT BREAD.

STONE. NOT CAKE. NOT CHEESE. NOT BREAD. . .

The man who tries to feed his hunger
by gnawing stone

is a FOOL; his hunger is

fed in ways that he knows cannot satisfy it.

4. *Epilogue: A Stanza from Horace*

At night in dreams I hold you
and now I pursue you
fleeing through the grass of the Campus Martius,
you, through the waters (you are cruel) fleeing.

Berkeley, California; 1983.

FRANK BIDART

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everything except his art. It is like meals not eaten, and beauties not ravished; desire depends on its own frustration.

Buñuel appreciated America, like any connoisseur of the fantastic. He had come here first in 1930, just because his films had made a stir in Europe, no matter that no one in Hollywood had bothered to see them. He was taken on by MGM to learn the business: he went on Garbo's set and alarmed the lady with the passion of his scorched eyes. Thereafter he went to the studio once a week to collect his paycheck, and to marvel at the expense and obsession of the make-believe. Buñuel is sometimes enlisted as a committed social critic. But the first surrealists recognized that daft Hollywood had made the most dreamy of films, the most thorough aspirations to disorder. As Buñuel wandered the MGM lot, he may have felt himself in the kingdom of the surrealist manifesto: "In these studios, everything seemed possible; had they wanted to, they could have reconstructed the universe."

HE HOBNOBBED with Josef von Sternberg and Chaplin. Charlie had him home several weekends, always insisting that the shocking *Chien Andalou* be run for guests already stunned by sun and glamor. (Years later, Buñuel learned that the apparently admiring Chaplin had also used the movie as an ogre-deterrent to the naughtiness of his daughter, Geraldine.) One day, Buñuel attended an MGM fete as Louis B. Mayer congratulated the entire staff on their spirit of cooperation. "I was beside myself," writes our LB, "the whole scene was beyond me." At last the studio realized he was doing nothing for them. He provoked the crisis with the zeal of all self-destructives. Asked to listen to Lily Damita speaking Spanish to discover whether she had an accent, he retorted, "I'm not here as a Spaniard. I'm here as a Frenchman. And what's more, you go tell Thalberg that I don't waste my time listening to women who sleep around!"

As he departed, and even afterwards, he treasured the dreamland: "When I remember that strange way of life, the Californian heat, the American naiveté, I still have the same good, warm feelings as I did then." That's not irony; it's rather more the pleasure of someone who has found an environment of madness, luck, and sleepy enchantment. Buñuel seems never to have treated his own life as a bank balance or a locomotive: it neither grows nor gets anywhere. He gives himself up to whim, coincidence, and fate, living eventually in Mexico, despite his aversion to the heat, resuming his career as a director in the 1940s only because someone asked him, giving up imminent U.S. citizenship to make cheap quickies in Mexico, one of the least esteemed film industries in the world.

YET MEXICO allowed Buñuel to reenter the film community. All of a sudden, the dreamer reliant on his mother's money became a professional director, working on assignments, but knifing his own fun into the cracks between clichés. He seldom outraged the Mexican system; he merely showed how far all "sensible" or "businesslike" films partake of fantasy and long for obscure objects of desire. In middle age, he settled down, spacing out his favorite café-life with movies, shot in four weeks for a couple of hundred thousand dollars each—*Gran Casino*, *Los Olvidados*, *La Hija del Engano*, *Subida al Cielo*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *El*, a version of *Wuthering Heights*, *La Illusion Viaja en Tranvia*, *Ensayo de un Crimen*, *Nazarin*, and so on.

These are still his least-known works, handicapped by (yet indifferent to) poor acting, rough technique, and enforced economies. They also revealed Buñuel as an intense poet of the automatic, insensate inner life, so convinced of film's fantastic instinct that he hardly distinguished between the "social realism" of *Los Olvidados* (about slum kids) and the landscape of paranoia's certainty in *El*. He learned the importance of scripts, and the necessary rejection of the picturesque in filmmaking. Buñuel's camera never sucks up to us with beauty. His style is off-hand, obvious, efficient—a way of seeing the extraordinary. He is one of those directors who knows the medium is so marvelous that the visual does not have to be stressed with point of view. Just look, the cinema says, and see this lifelike lie. So fixed on the enigma of the medium's achievement, Buñuel transcended issues of style.

Film reclaimed him. *Los Olvidados* won the prize for direction at Cannes; several of the Mexican films were released abroad. And so, in 1960, Spain invited him home to make a film. *Viridiana* was his most pungent attack on established religion, one of his best practical jokes, and an embarrassment to Spain when it won critical acclaim and the Palme d'Or at Cannes. By now, Buñuel was set on a pattern of living in Mexico and going to Europe to make films. He had attractive stars and larger budgets. His plain mysteries took on luster and stealth. The ailing man complained and said he was worn out. Perhaps he could not make masterpieces without believing they were inflicted on him. But they came anyway, one after another, so famous that most have English titles—*The Exterminating Angel*, *Diary of a Chambermaid*, *Belle de Jour*, *The Milky Way*, *Tristana*, *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie*, *The Phantom of Liberty* (perhaps his favorite), and *That Obscure Object of Desire*.

JUST AS there was nothing boastful or ingratiating in the films, so the autobiography has no pressing wish to be liked. The writer assumes both that we have seen the films, and that we know he would not have made them if he could explain them. So faithful to chance, impulse, and the unexpected, Buñuel filmed our daydream of hope and anxiety. He knew that film had so much force and drive—an express train of verisimilitude in whose slipstream we are windblown and exhilarated—that narrative or causal connection was redundant. He never thought to grow rich as a filmmaker; he never took the task that seriously. It was something to do, pleasant enough and amusing sometimes, but finally no more or less worthy than a sigh or a dry martini.

The man never emerges fully, not from secrecy or reticence, but because of his mistrust of palpable or reliable personality and his preference for ghosts. Buñuel and Dali always claimed that they had meant *Un Chien Andalou* to be beyond interpretation. And in his last film, *That Obscure Object of Desire*, there was a moment when Buñuel had Fernando Rey pick up a sack and walk off carrying it, without knowing or even wondering why. There was just a rightness in the look, a mystery, that said more than all the answers in all the thrillers.

The book is as cryptic and elusive as the films. It is idiosyncratic, but never intimate. Something harsh and haughty remains. It may be a Spanish trait, or a ghost's lack of belief in real people. But the reader cannot quite ignore the streaks of malice in Buñuel's jokes, his absentminded cruelty, the interest in

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guns, the neglect of family life, and the throwaway remarks about liquor, whores, and violent death. He does truly reckon on life as a kind of brutal illusion, not worthy of gravity or sincerity. But the scorn may be a defense, like the gloom of a god who has given up on his world. Despite his lifelong defiance of God, Buñuel's sensibility invokes some designer of the game who watches the fools we make of ourselves. This is a god somewhere between a gambler and a film director.

As befits a book by a god masquerading as an atheist, it is not simply honest and not quite all Buñuel. It includes a chapter of memoirs by a sister, Conchita, and the rest was put together by Buñuel (in French first, not Spanish) with his recent scenarist, Jean-Claude Carrière. One can imagine them sitting down on cool days, being bored by the blunt facts of the life and bending towards digression. So the chronology is made picaresque with chapters on love affairs, bars, dreams, and chance, with anecdotes about guns, and with an entire chapter, "Pro and Con," that is a list of Buñuel's heartfelt but arbitrary tastes—for de Sade, Wagner, Fritz Lang, the cold, the north, the rain; against the blind, Borges, the press, statistics, vivisection; for cream pies, marinated herring, Toledo, snakes and rats, firearms, and secret passageways; against politics and prophets; for dwarves, funerals, and all sorts of little tools.

It is the best part of the book, the one most like a film. But, without ever setting out to be this, *My Last Sigh* is as true an addition to Buñuel's work as *Fun in a Chinese Laundry* was the ghost of an extra film by von Sternberg. It is deceptively simple and candidly devious. It is as chilly as the climate Buñuel preferred, and as pitiless as chance. Whether written, dictated, or talked out, it is one of the best books ever offered by a moviemaker. Though that context is not demanding enough to give proper credit, *My Last Sigh* is a delight and a scourge, like all of its writer's films.

And so Buñuel is dead, along with so many of that generation of directors born when the medium was young and all-important—Renoir, Hitchcock, René Clair, George Cukor, Vittorio De Sica, Sergei Eisenstein, John Ford, Howard Hawks, Leo McCarey, Kenji Mizoguchi, Max Ophuls, Yasujiro Ozu, Roberto Rossellini, Alf Sjoberg, Preston Sturges, Irving Thalberg, Dziga Vertov, King Vidor, Jean Vigo, Josef von Sternberg—all born between 1894 and 1905. It is an astounding generation, and no one aware of its films and of those made now can hope that we will see their like again. Luis Buñuel is the proper human landmark for a moment when Europe met America and the schemes of religion, property, and progress were reassessed as dreams.

Buñuel was not as impressed by the world as he was by the imagination. He foresaw an afterlife in which he is as ghostly as all the creatures in films:

> Frankly, despite my horror of the press, I'd love to rise from the grave every ten years or so and go buy a few newspapers. Ghostly pale, sliding silently along the walls, my papers under my arm, I'd return to the cemetery and read about all the disasters in the world before falling back to sleep, safe and secure in my tomb.

Luis Buñuel: vague man, wholly ghost. A man devoted to sword canes. He had six of them, and felt safer when walking to think of his secret blade. Against sombreros, for solitude.

DAVID THOMSON

David Thomson is the author of *A Biographical Dictionary of Film* and *Overexposures*, both published by William Morrow.

ROSENBERGS REDUX

The Rosenberg File
by Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton

(Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 608 pp., $22.50)

The place of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in the hard left's pantheon of martyrs is secure; no new evidence, no matter how potent, is likely to tarnish their image in the eyes of the faithful. Few recall, however, that at the time the Rosenberg case was not really a cause of the left, nor even—until very late in the day—a Communist cause. From the time of their arrest in the summer of 1950, through the trial, the death sentences, and much of the appeals process—for a period, then, of nearly two-and-a-half years—the international Communist movement and its American branch actually ignored the travails of this young couple, whose devotion to the Party and the creed was never in dispute. The process by which the Rosenbergs were elevated to mythic status as tragic heroes of the left—innocent victims of Cold War hysteria—commenced with the Communist Party's adoption of the case as a cause in November 1952. Why just then? And why the delay? In a sense, the answers to these questions contain the essential story of this entire episode, a story told with elegance, clarity, and scholarship in this book. It is a magnificent and definitive study.

In *The Rosenberg File*, Ronald Radosh and Joyce Milton present the fruits of years of research. The authors examined some two hundred thousand pages of F.B.I., C.I.A., and other government documents, newly available under the Freedom of Information Act, and they conducted extensive interviews with dozens of individuals connected to the case, among them David Greenglass—Ethel Rosenberg's brother—and his wife Ruth. The Greenglasses, whose testimony was the core of the government's case against the Rosenbergs, have lived under assumed names since David's release from prison. Never before have they made themselves available to students of the case.

The authors make judicious use of the vast treasure of evidence uncovered by their patient detective work. The conclusions they draw are based on information gleaned from independent (and sometimes even hostile) corroborating sources. For example, one important informant was Julius Rosenberg's fellow inmate, Jerome Tartakow, a young man serving a two-year sentence for interstate auto theft. He won Rosenberg's trust and simultaneously served as an F.B.I. informant, regularly feeding authorities valuable, often detailed tips—first in hopes of an early parole,

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later in exchange for financial compensation. The F.B.I.'s well-placed informant—Tartakow and Rosenberg were daily chess partners—produced enough information to make it possible for agents to locate a witness to an alleged trip Rosenberg made to Ithaca for purposes of espionage. But the Bureau was stymied, unable to pursue the incident, when the witness in question refused to cooperate either with the F.B.I. or with a grand jury. Radosh and Milton have located this witness: he is James Weinstein, today the editor of a Chicago-based left-wing newspaper, *In These Times*. Now, more than thirty years later, Weinstein confirms the essential facts of the story that Tartakow weaseled out of an unwitting Julius Rosenberg. Such is the range of the research and the quality of the evidence on which the authors' primary conclusions are based.

The evidence and documentation in *The Rosenberg File* is so overwhelming that on the left a storm is already gathering. Partisan researchers—students of the case driven by a strong ideological interest in proving the Rosenbergs' innocence—have set out, led by Walter and Miriam Schneir, authors of a newly reissued volume on the case, to discredit the book. It may well be that there are some mistakes to be found in its many pages; it would be surprising indeed if a study so rich in detail contained none. But it is safe to predict that no mistakes will be found at the heart of the work.

It appears also that some from the old left, after seeing this book, regret having assisted its authors by granting them interviews—some, in fact, disclaim their statements, all of which Radosh and Milton say they have recorded on tapes or in notes. Max Gordon, for example, a former *Daily Worker* editor, is quoted in *The Rosenberg File* to the effect that anyone who became involved with spying for the Soviet Union ceased to play a visible role in the Party and Party-related activities—an interesting point, since it tends to confirm as a general pattern what was true in the case of the Rosenbergs. (Julius and Ethel dropped out of the Party in 1943, on the eve of the alleged conspiracy.) Gordon, conceding that he was interviewed by Radosh, now denies having said what is attributed to him. It's a familiar response by now: as Victor Navasky, the editor of *The Nation*, wrote in connection with similar disclaimers made by some who had assisted Allen Weinstein in his splendid study of the Hiss case: "... it is not uncommon for a subject to disown even the most accurate verbatim reportage once he sees what he said in cold print, especially when it is used in a way which compromises or embarrasses a cause or a friend."

As it happens, precisely what Radosh and Milton do most effectively is demolish the central contention of their leading critics, most notably Walter and Miriam Schneir. In their book, *Invitation to An Inquest*, first published in the late 1960s, reissued periodically since then, and rushed into print now with new chapters purporting to address issues posed by this massive trove of newly released government documents, the Schneirs advance the thesis that the Rosenbergs were the victims of an F.B.I. frame-up. In a carefully crafted appendix, Radosh and Milton demonstrate that specific elements in the frame-up charge—the claim, for example, that the F.B.I. doctored a hotel registration card for the Albuquerque Hilton, signed by Harry Gold, the courier who led the F.B.I. to David Greenglass—are entirely without merit. *The Rosenberg File* succeeds in establishing, in its wealth of documented detail, that suggestions of a frame-up simply strain credulity. They require a belief in a carefully synchronized international conspiracy involving the F.B.I., the K.G.B., various American Communists, and other participants of differing political persuasions, which in the end is simply preposterous.

THE AUTHORS conclude that Julius Rosenberg played a key role in a Soviet espionage ring, helping to transmit, among other things, material that he believed contained atomic secrets. The information Rosenberg helped convey was not in fact as important as he believed—nor as critical as suggested by trial judge Irving R. Kaufman, who charged the Rosenbergs, before sentencing them, with a degree of responsibility for Communist aggression in Korea. But neither was the material entirely worthless, as some have argued over the years. As for Ethel Rosenberg, the authors demonstrate that she knew and approved of her husband's activities, and may even have typed the notes he passed to the Soviets. But in no sense, Radosh and Milton contend, was she deeply involved. (Morton Sobell, the Rosenbergs' co-defendant, as ignored by history as he was at the time of the trial, was probably involved in the conspiracy in a minor way. It was unfair even to try him together with the Rosenbergs. He continues, after a long jail term, part of it in Alcatraz, to assert his innocence.)

What seems to have happened is this. In the course of its investigations, the F.B.I. determined that Rosenberg, in addition to having been involved with the theft of atomic secrets in 1944 and 1945, was a lynchpin in another spy ring. This latter ring, still active when the F.B.I. swooped down upon it in early 1950, was engaged largely in industrial espionage (a number of its members were engineers). It consisted of a group of young men and women, all of about the same age and from roughly the same backgrounds—working-class or middle-class New York Jews—and all Communists. As the authorities closed in, members scattered; two, never seen since, were assumed to have vanished behind the Iron Curtain.

Since the Radosh-Milton book was published, new information has come to light confirming that the two engineers, Joel Barr and Alfred Sarant, did indeed make their way (via Mexico and Prague) to Leningrad, where Barr still lives and works under the name Josef V. Berg. Sarant, who also disappeared at the time of Julius Rosenberg's arrest, died in the Soviet Union in 1979, after a long and successful career as a microelectronics engineer working for the Soviet military. A recent emigré from the Soviet Union who knew and worked with Sarant—or Filip G. Staros as he called himself—has provided this new information, which has been confirmed by members of the family Sarant left behind in the United States. Sarant, the subject of a highly laudatory 1979 obituary in *Izvestia*, is said to have done work of such significance that it even came to the attention of Nikita Khrushchev and Dmitri Ustinov. The defection of Barr and Sarant to the U.S.S.R. has long seemed the likeliest explanation of their disappearance. Yet it is interesting to note that even within the last few months, Walter Schneir, obviously uncomfortable with the notion that the two missing engineers found their way to the Soviet Union—which would have been possible only with official Soviet assistance—still has been advancing the thesis that Sarant (and his mistress) were killed by Mexican bandits. So

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much for two of Julius Rosenberg's key confederates.

In some of their best sleuthing, Radosh and Milton endeavor to trace the escape efforts of this group (which included Sarant, Barr, and a number of others), after demonstrating indisputably the actual existence of a spy ring. The government needed information from Julius Rosenberg in order to proceed in this more immediate case. But Rosenberg refused to talk. The arrest, the trial, and the death sentence of Ethel Rosenberg are properly understood as an attempt to coerce Julius into cooperating. On the eve of the execution, the F.B.I. prepared a list of questions for Julius, but not for Ethel, just in case he would agree in the last minute to break down and talk. (The option, it had been made clear, was always open.) One of these never-used eleventh-hour questions reveals how limited the Bureau believed Ethel's complicity to have been. Julius was to have been asked, simply: "Was your wife cognizant of your activities?"

THE CYNICAL use of Ethel Rosenberg as a pawn—held hostage to induce Julius to confess—is the most unseemly example of governmental misconduct in the case. It is, however, by no means the only one. F.B.I. and Atomic Energy Commission files strongly suggest that Judge Kaufman took part in highly improper ex-parte communications with various persons connected with the prosecution. In particular, Kaufman appears to have consulted with Irving Saypol, the U.S. attorney who prosecuted the case, on the issue of sentencing. Evidently the judge decided against hearing sentencing recommendations in open court after learning that the Justice Department and the F.B.I. favored no more than a prison sentence for Ethel Rosenberg. It seems that Kaufman had already decided on a double death penalty; he did not, however, wish to appear to be going beyond what the government thought reasonable. Further instances of governmental and judicial impropriety include Saypol's announcement of a criminal indictment in a related case, which was timed to rouse the emotions of the public—including the Rosenberg jury—against the defendants.

It does not come as a total surprise to learn that the prosecution was anxious to secure a conviction, nor even that Kaufman was set on the death penalty. Radosh and Milton detail the improprieties that attended the effort to achieve these ends. Thus critics of the manner in which the trial was handled by the government—and, more importantly, by the judge—have a powerful case. But conspiracy theorists who argue the Rosenbergs' innocence do not.

The shock comes in the authors' analysis of attorney Emanuel H. Bloch's defense of the Rosenbergs. Radosh and Milton raise serious doubts about his interest in saving the lives of his clients. During the trial, Bloch's strategy seemed bizarre, to say the least. At one point, he moved for the impounding of technical evidence related to David Greenglass's testimony—on grounds of national security. He thereby conceded the importance of the data allegedly stolen and transmitted. Radosh and Milton note: "It was not Bloch's job to bolster the credibility of the chief prosecution witness in the eyes of the jury. By any accepted standards of lawyerly behavior, his move was so extraordinary as to border on malpractice." Albert Einstein, who initially lent his name to pro-Rosenberg activities, balked at further involvement, concluding that the cause was "Communist-inspired" and confiding to colleagues that Bloch's objections to publication of the Greenglass technical testimony "led him to conclude that the Communists did not want the Rosenbergs to be saved." Einstein's suspicions were not without foundation. Bloch's conduct after the trial was even more extraordinary and inexplicable; his relation to those suspected by Einstein—"the Communists"—remains to be considered.

DURING the effort to appeal the verdict, various attorneys from around the country volunteered to assist the defense. Some contributed their help without Bloch's approval. And at important points in the trial the Rosenbergs' defense attorney did not merely spurn outside offers of aid. He actually endeavored to sabotage the efforts of others on behalf of his clients, even when it appeared these efforts might meet with favorable judicial response. In June 1953, Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas issued a last-minute stay of execution, in response to an argument made by Fyke Farmer, a Tennessee lawyer and one of the legal volunteers whose efforts Bloch both resented and impeded. "My own impression," Douglas writes in his memoir, "was that Bloch never raised the point because the Communist consensus of that day was that it was best for the cause that the Rosenbergs pay the extreme price."

At the outset of the case, and throughout the period of the trial, Bloch—a left-wing lawyer long associated with Communist causes—took a position which conceded in effect that a crime had been committed, but denied the connection of the Rosenbergs to the crime. Bloch praised both judge and prosecutor for their fairness and appealed to the jury for fair play, acknowledging, for practical purposes, that his clients were Communists, but asserting that this did not make them Soviet spies. The Party, at this juncture, ignored the case entirely. The Rosenbergs, quite obviously, were Communists. And the last thing the Party was anxious to call attention to was a link between C.P. membership and espionage. Protesting political persecution under the Smith Act was one thing; grappling with charges of atomic espionage was quite another. Thus the Party's attitude at this stage, and the quiet, restrained defense offered by Bloch, meshed perfectly.

The Party's view of the Rosenbergs at the time is summed up in *The Rosenberg File* by John Gates, a former *Daily Worker* editor: "It was taken for granted among us that they were guilty." Gates goes on to note, however, that "we had this kind of double thinking. While they were guilty of course, they were also innocent. They were framed because anyone who was indicted by the capitalists was *ipso facto* framed." After the trial, this largely unexpressed thought—the notion that the Rosenbergs were framed—began to surface in certain quarters. Not at the top, though; the hands-off Party line remained firmly in force. But a few mavericks, some C.P. members, others sympathizers, began to take up the call. In August 1951 *The Guardian*, a non-Party, pro-Soviet news organ, ran a long and detailed series of articles alleging a frame-up. In November 1951, a National Committee to Secure Justice in the Rosenberg Case was formed. At the outset the committee had to struggle. Efforts to win the Party's blessing were rebuffed. The C.P. officially ignored the committee. Indeed, some of the activists were actually instructed to drop "the Rosenberg thing." Bloch's relationship to the committee was guarded

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and uncertain. He refused to allow committee activists access to the Rosenbergs—even after the committee achieved a wide following. And the mavericks, in turn, had their doubts about Bloch. One founding member said recently that Bloch's strategy could well be summed up as "a defense of the Party and nothing of Ethel."

In November 1952, the fortunes of the committee experienced a sudden and dramatic turn for the better. Money began to pour in. Chapters were established throughout Europe. What *Daily Worker* editor John Gates referred to as "the long-awaited signal from the international movement" had finally arrived. What took so long? There were two factors. A key consideration was that it had become abundantly clear that the Rosenbergs were not going to talk. The couple continued to assert their innocence, despite a painful and ominous rebuff from the Court of Appeals. As V. J. Jerome, the long-time cultural commissar of the Party, told Gates: "They're heroes. They're going to their death without saying a word." From the Party's standpoint, this was critical—the C.P. had to be certain that the Rosenbergs would not break down and name the members of the "other spy ring," thereby providing the unmistakable appearance of a link between ordinary Party membership and espionage.

THE SECOND factor in the Party's decision to embrace the case of the Rosenbergs was an event taking place in Prague in November 1952. Rudolf Slansky, the general-secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, and thirteen other high state and Party officials, had been placed on trial for treason. The accused were compelled to perform the time-honored show-trial ritual of public confession. Slansky and ten of his co-defendants were Jews. And the trial—which ended with the execution of eleven of the accused—had about it the aura of classical European anti-Semitism. The Communists in the United States and Western Europe, in other words, felt a pressing need to shift the attention of the world from "the Jew, Slansky," sitting in the dock in Prague, charged with entirely incredible misdeeds on behalf of "international Zionism." A decision was made to mount an international campaign of protest against a "genuine" incident of anti-Semitism: the Rosenberg case. Thus Jacque Duclos, the ardent Stalinist and chairman of the French Communist Party, pronounced that "the conviction of U.S. atom spies Julius and Ethel Rosenberg was an example of anti-Semitism . . . but the execution of eight Jews in Czechoslovakia last week was not." American and "capitalist" anti-Semitism became a central theme of the growing international movement to "save the Rosenbergs." The rhetorical form this propaganda took is exemplified by an article which appeared in *L'Humanité*, the French Communist newspaper, authored by the internationally celebrated novelist and (at the time) leading American Communist, Howard Fast. Fast denounced "the stale smell of fascism" which "the Jewish masses of our country detected around Eisenhower." Noting the fact of Jewish prosecutors and a Jewish judge in the Rosenberg trial, Fast saw "exactly the techniques of a Jewish tribunal employed by Hitler."

AS THE international Communist movement at long last embraced the cause, the Rosenberg committee—originally an amalgam of mavericks—found itself in step with, and eventually controlled by, the Party. The C.P.'s goal, the committee's goal, and Bloch's goal, became as one: political victory. Political victory, moreover, and not judicial success. A political triumph could be achieved by creating martyrs, or by exercising sufficient political pressure—through mass protests, here and abroad—to compel a Presidential grant of clemency. The legal battle in the courts could not, under any circumstances, produce as satisfactory a result. A legal finding favorable to the Rosenbergs might seem to vindicate a judicial system which the Rosenbergs, and Bloch, and the committee, and the Communist movement had collectively decried as nothing less than a tool of incipient American fascism. Considered from a more practical and less ideological perspective, the continuing efforts to appeal the verdict might lead the Court to order a new trial, and there were those who knew that a second trial might lead the government to introduce additional evidence—originally withheld on national security grounds, since the breaking of a K.G.B. code was involved—demonstrating still more extensive connections between American Communists and treason.

Bloch did not exactly want his clients

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to die. He preferred life, as did the Rosenbergs themselves, and perhaps to a lesser degree, the Party. But only on their own dishonest terms. Then again, honesty was never the point. As John Gates explains, whether they did what they were charged with doing was altogether irrelevant. They were arrested and tried by the "capitalists"—and it followed, as the night the day, that there had been a frame-up. As Ethel Rosenberg wrote in their written-for-publication "Death House Letters," they were nothing less than the "first victims of American fascism."

ERIC BREINDEL

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PLAIN AND PHILOSOPHICAL

The Static Element: Selected Poems of Natan Zach translated by Peter Everwine and Shulamit Yasny-Starkman

(Atheneum, 73 pp., $12.95, $7.95 paper)

Israel is a poetry-intoxicated country. In a good month as many volumes of poetry appear in Israel as are published by major houses in America. Poems dot the weekend supplements. Soldiers write poems, as do chemists and kibbutz members. There are two reasons for this, I believe. The turbulence of recent Jewish history has not permitted the creation of enough stable social reality for the novel to represent; lyric moments—stories, perhaps—can be snatched from the flux, but not much else. The creation and consumption of poetry, in addition, constitutes something of a displaced religious impulse. The Jews in the twentieth century moved rapidly from religious culture into modernity, and nowhere as precipitously as in the militant secularity of Israel's founders. Zionist culture and the tasks it had to face left little room for the tending of the inner life. Under the guise of art, poetry in Israel has often discharged the burden of introspection and wonder that was once the domain of prayer.

The intensity of the poetry scene in Israel has produced an abundance of styles and schools, yet in English only one figure has become well known: Yehuda Amichai. Amichai's fame is well deserved. He is, simply, a great poet. His reputation in America, however, is not accidental. Amichai has taken pains to make sure that his work has been well translated and published under good auspices, and he has made himself a frequent figure on the reading circuit of campuses and Ys. The poetry itself travels extremely well. The stunning metaphorical couplings and the witty conceits, which are the foundation of his technique, retain much of their vividness in English. His verse mixes eroticism with an awareness of living through moments in the life of Israeli society. This is an attractive package, and one which supplies the satisfactions we want from reading Israeli poetry: knowing what it is like to be a man and a poet in this special and peculiar country.

On his native ground, however, Amichai does not have the field to himself. Of the poets who emerged in the 1950s and 1960s, Amichai's prominence in Israeli poetry is shared by a figure little known in English, Natan Zach. Amichai is more popular, Zach more highly regarded in literary circles. Because Zach's moves depend on fine manipulations of tone and idiom, his verse does not go over into English easily. By temperament, he is the less immediately captivating poet. Where Amichai is always falling out of love, Zach is dug into an estrangement beyond expectation of romance, and where Amichai delights in the image-making capacity of language, Zach is preoccupied with the seduction of poetic gorgeousness and its potential for evasion and denial. This is the other, darker side of the poetic landscape in Israel, and the publication of this first substantial selection of Zach in English, which struggles honorably with all these difficulties, is an important exposure to this terrain.

More than Amichai, Zach has been an aggressive polemicist on behalf of the literary values of himself and his generation. Zach led the attack against Natan Alterman, the regnant force in Hebrew poetry in the 1930s and 1940s. Alterman's poetics, rooted in early twentieth-century Russian and French verse, was characterized by rich musicality, semantic lushness, and balladistic facility. Zach called for a general devaluation of poetic currency. Poetry had to be brought back close to the bone of modern consciousness. Against the temptation to exploit the full sonal and figurative potentials of language, Zach argued for restraint, even retrenchment. In place of poetry's dream of its otherness, Zach made the case for ordinary speech—with its banalities, its inelegance, its slipperiness—as the right vehicle for a new poetics of authenticity.

Like many manifestos, Zach's has had disastrous results for lesser talents, producing poetry which is merely deflated and talky. Zach himself has by and large made good on his claim, though not always in the manner he advertised. His poetry displays a preternatural sense of the planes and knots of communication, and of the unreliability of manifest meanings:

> What you are meant to say
> you say with suspicious fluency.
> What you wish to say
> sometimes is said between the lines.
> But what you make an effort to say
> is not said, as if it were so meant.

Zach turns this evasive vagueness into an advantage; it becomes a way of speaking about large matters without naming names. Take the opening of a dialogue between a man and a woman:

> From year to year it grows more refined,
> it will be so very refined in the end —
> she said, speaking of it.

The antecedent of the "it" is never supplied; we know only that it stands for something essential the male speaker is afraid of losing and something whose loss the woman's awkward consolations only make worse. Although we know that the "it" represents something like self, will, or being, Zach never allows his poem to violate the diction of talk. Zach is in fact an intensely and disingenuously philosophical poet, yet one who has found the only clean me-

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dium for discussion of metaphysics to be the banalities of our common speech.

It is just such procedures which make Zach a hard case for translation. Zach discriminates the precise register of a banality and knows how to make use of it. Many of the poems, moreover, are undercut in their last lines by a shopworn idiom suddenly literalized by what's gone before. Although a translator might ordinarily reach for an English idiom with a comparable function, this tactic doesn't work for Zach because the figure of speech is too entangled in the specific arrangements of the poem as a whole.

In these instances, the translators, Peter Everwine and Shulamit Yasny-Starkman, have acquitted themselves well. Yet their smartest move is to weight their selection from Zach's works in favor of a different kind of poem, one which depends less on these close-grained conversational effects. These are what might be called Zach's wisdom poems, after the examples of such classical wisdom literature as Ecclesiastes and Job. The question of wisdom literature is: How should a man live in this world at this time? and Zach's answers are as prescriptive and didactic as those of his ancient models. What saves Zach's wisdom from being tiresome is the illusionless authority of the voice that speaks it, and the very fact that after so much experience of futility there should still be a wisdom to offer. The message of this voice is a counsel of sobriety and cunning.

> Be careful. Open your life
> only to the wind that has touched distances.
> Suffer the absent. Speak up
> only in the nights of solitude.

When the flux of emotion comes, which no man can prevent, yield neither to the temptation of spontaneous expression nor to the transfiguring power of words.

> Such joy, such pain, these are only words.
> Conceal your joy. Gather your pain
> into a safe place. Write only when your hand
> needs nothing, not even the loose change of the world.

These poems take up a position on the far side of resignation, in a world in which only tatters of meaning remain. To hold onto these scraps, to husband them and make something of them in the right time—this requires extraordinary restraint. "The courage to wait," writes Zach in what might be a comment on contemporary poetry, "is greater than the courage to confess."

What, in the end, is Israeli about Zach's poetry? Very little. Zach's practice places him—in a very strong position—within an international modernism, and in it he has created a strikingly personal rather than national idiom. For Amichai there are the ghosts of religion and the Bible, the physical mystique of Jerusalem, as well as the transcendence of love and metaphor. Zach has committed himself to "suffer the absent" and to admit no re-enchantment of the void—save the gaiety of despair and the wit of irony.

ALAN MINTZ

Alan Mintz teaches Hebrew literature at the University of Maryland. He is the author of *George Eliot and the Novel of Vocation* (Harvard) and the co-editor of *Prooftexts, A Journal of Jewish Literary History*.

WELCOME THE WIMPS

About My Table
by Nicholas Delbanco

(Morrow, 203 pp., $11.95)

Moon Deluxe
by Frederick Barthelme

(Simon and Schuster, 240 pp., $15.95)

Beautiful Women; Ugly Scenes
by C.D.B. Bryan

(Doubleday, 374 pp., $16.95)

"A man would never get the notion of writing a book on the peculiar situation of the human male," Simone de Beauvoir wrote in *The Second Sex* (1949), the book that helped inspire a flood of literature about the peculiar female predicament: manifestos and monographs, and a stream of novels—"the female sexual picaresque," one critic called the emerging genre. But to judge by the publishers' lists of the last decade or so, Beauvoir spoke too soon about men. Thanks to feminism, men have begun to feel their situation is less powerful and more peculiar, and they have gotten the notion of writing about it. Their books don't yet occupy as much space in the bookstores as women's do. But back in the how-to, pop psychology sections, a shelf has been filling up with titles like *The Male Machine, The Liberated Male, The Hazards of Being Male, On Men and Manhood*. *The New York Times* recently launched a weekly column, "About Men," to match the six-year-old "Hers" column. And now Nicholas Delbanco, Frederick Barthelme, and C.D.B. Bryan, none of them novice writers, have turned to fiction about men ill at ease in a post-feminist age.

In *About My Table*, *Moon Deluxe*, and *Beautiful Women; Ugly Scenes*, the women's movement has made its mark, and men find their lot unsettlingly altered. Where literary heroes have commonly busied themselves with physical and intellectual explorations of the world and women, the more liberated male characters in these books are preoccupied by the challenge to inhabit an unfamiliar emotional realm, once the special province of women; there's less of that old manly worry about wearing the pants, and more about wearing their hearts on their sleeves.

Twenty years ago, before such new ideals of manhood had caught on, Saul Bellow's Moses Herzog rebelled against retreating to this intimate sphere, against settling for a life that revolved around women. "What was he hanging around for?" he moaned to himself at

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one especially low point in *Herzog*:

> To follow this career of *personal relationships* until his strength at last gave out? Only to be a smashing success in the private realm, a king of hearts? Amorous Herzog, seeking love and embracing his Wandas, Zinkas, and Ramonas, one after another? But this is female pursuit. This hugging and heartbreak is for women. The occupation of men is in duty, in use, in civility, in politics in the Aristotelian sense.

A decade later Peter Tarnopol in Philip Roth's *My Life as a Man* also berated himself for letting amorous entanglements distract him from his higher vocation, writing. Lamenting "that sense [in women] of defenselessness and vulnerability that has come to be a mark of their sex and is often at the core of their relations with men," he too aspired to more than coping with his Maureens and Susans.

Delbanco, Barthelme, and Bryan don't give their protagonists such impatient, manly gestures, or such defenseless damsels. For their men, the career of personal relationships comes close to eclipsing all other pursuits, active or contemplative. And that career now bears the mark Tarnopol saw stamped on women's lives: the sense of vulnerability at the core of their relations with the opposite sex.

THE TONE of these books about newly vulnerable men is subdued—quite different from so much of what gets loosely lumped as "women's fiction," in which feminist defiance has often replaced female defenselessness. In these liberated times, Barbara Ehrenreich observes in her new book, *The Hearts of Men*, "women's issues are power issues, while male issues are human issues." The narrator of Leonard Michaels's *The Men's Club*, a parodic foray into "men's fiction" of a few years ago, reluctantly agrees that men's themes are now softer, quieter ones. "I thought again about the women," he says wistfully. "Anger, identity, politics, rights, wrongs. I envied them. It seemed attractive to be deprived in our society. Deprivation gives you something to fight for, it makes you morally superior, it makes you serious."

The male characters in these books, as well as their creators, aren't fired by such proud passions. The title of Nicholas Delbanco's collection of stories, *About My Table*, rather quaintly conjurs up hearth and home, and his characters' dilemmas are mostly domestic. In *Beautiful Women; Ugly Scenes* C.D.B. Bryan also turns away from large-scale drama; those messy scenes mostly happen in bedrooms and backyards. And Frederick Barthelme's shy bachelors are ambivalent about venturing outside; shopping expeditions are their idea of adventure. In fact, these authors describe their post-feminist protagonists behaving surprisingly like the unassertive, dependent women of less enlightened days—an otherwise extinct species, to judge by the aggressive females who stride so conspicuously through all three of these books.

"A proper man," one of Delbanco's characters has read, "is one who has fathered a son, built a house, and completed a book." The protagonists in this collection of nine stories—all but one of them married men in their mid- to late-30s, settled in modest professional and academic careers in the Northeast—don't quite fit this image of manhood, genteel though it is. Instead, they have gentler, more womanly habits. They specialize in daughters, toward whom they are devoted and attentive—more maternally solicitous than their wives. Only one, an architect, has designed a house, but most of them are occupied with helping to keep house. And only one has completed a book, which he hardly considers a great one. It has gradually dawned on him and the other characters that fulfillment and independence have eluded them somehow, but they're docile in their discontentment. The author of ten novels, Delbanco writes stories as muted as his men's lives—lightly plotted, lacking in variety.

Most of the stories turn on the characters' realization that they have paid an unexpected price for devoting their lives to the career of personal relationships that Herzog cursed: arriving at middle age, they feel empty. As Peter Danto walks along the beach in "Some in Their Bodies' Force," he reflects on his life and describes a feeling of secondary, dependent status that sounds like Beauvoir's portrait of woman as "the Other."

> He had been a "ladies' man" and now he was a "family man." He had acquaintances, of course, and men he could consult in need; he was sociable. But on the shore he felt himself abandoned, distinguished from the sea-wrack only by his sentient alertness to the distinction as such. And for an instant even this faded, even that self-consciousness was washed into transparency.

The dependency often starts even sooner. With more reverence than rancor, the narrator of "What You Carry" explains that he began as a mother's boy. "Through all his adolescence and young manhood, this was a constant: a continual sense . . . that his mother was someone to reckon with and serve." He can't seem to shake the courtier habit: his failure to render one duty—to deliver a grandchild to her before her death—comes to symbolize his disorientation in the world and in time.

It's the women, mothers and wives, who are autonomous and purposeful—and impatient with hapless males. "What you don't understand . . . is ambition," Edward's wife lectures him in "The Executor." "It's wanting to count in this world. . . . To make a difference. To be able to say, when you walk in a room,'I matter, I'm here. This is me.' " But pushiness has no appeal for these men, who instead submit to small-scale circumstances. "Directions: he had lived his life by them," George Allison ruefully reflects in "Marching Through Georgia." "What signs he read he followed; what turns he made he made with adequate warning and judiciously." A minor car accident—not his fault—jars him, just as a sudden surge of "rage—shock after shock of it" jolts Edward when he confronts the stark fact that "he was nothing original, never had been or would be." But they quickly compose themselves, outwardly at least. Within, they nurse "a sense of alternative possibilities," "dreams of escape," "a nostalgia for imagined opportunities that had not been, when offered, opportune." They're too demure for their own good, it's clear. Yet Delbanco only rumples their tweeds, never really roughing them up. He is ever patient with these well-meaning milquetoasts who know that without their women they would be truly, rather than only vaguely, lost.

The men in Frederick Barthelme's story collection don't have women they can rely on, and lead irresolute lives as beauties come and go. They are roughly the same age as Delbanco's characters, but the external similarities end there. Single, they live in the Southwest, in a garish landscape of bright blue pools, lobster-pink stucco bungalows, fast-food places with "oversize four-color wrapped-in-clear-vinyl menus"—

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worlds away from the natural hues of Delbanco's New England. Those who are employed—and most of these aimless men have no discernible occupation—work for "a company"; what kind of company, or in what kinds of jobs, we never learn. Their main activity consists in puzzling, passive encounters with women.

THE INTERIOR lives of Barthelme's protagonists are more difficult to describe, even though most of the stories are narrated in the first person. These men are eerily impassive, apparently mesmerized by their gleaming surroundings—especially by sleek women (one man spends days fixated on a succession of gorgeous salesgirls at a mall). In seventeen super-realistically sharp, sometimes funny, but finally inscrutable stories (most of which previously appeared in *The New Yorker*), Barthelme probes only far enough to note that his characters are always lonely and often nervous.

Women are what make them nervous. Generally younger than the narrators, Barthelme's female characters are energetically bizarre where Delbanco's are businesslike, but they too are the assertive figures—not the men. Antonia of the title story is perhaps the most intimidating eyeful of them all:

> . . .she's huge, extraordinary, easily over six feet. Taller than you. Her skin is glass-smooth and her pale eyes are a watery turquoise. Her hair is parted on one side and brushed flat back to her scalp. She [is] . . . wearing khaki shorts and a white T-shirt with "So many men, so little time" silk-screened in two lines across the chest.

As that motto suggests, these women are hungry and in a hurry, and they seem to have Barthelme's quiet men at their mercy. They corral them into cars, jabber at them, impose on them, dump them, while the men nod and feel nervous. Like so many women of yore, the men appear to be ciphers until these manic creatures arrive and rouse them. While the men wait, Barthelme frequently describes them cleaning, like fastidious housewives—emptying the refrigerator, vacuuming the carpet. When they're out with women, they're usually eating, like children—playing with their peas, piling up one-inch squares of roast beef, arranging cream containers into football teams.

What they rarely resemble are grown-up men. They take graphic note of women's bodies, but seem strangely disembodied themselves, conveying no sign of sexual energy. In fact, they're often so aloof that women lose interest (some of them inclining instead to sinister men, or to other women). This female fickleness in turn seems to confirm the men in their cautiousness, although they never reveal their thoughts or hearts. In one story, "Lumber," the subject of relations between the sexes explicitly arises—it's the implicit theme of all of the stories—but the discussion does little to clarify the protagonist's, or Barthelme's, view of the matter. Milby, one of several peripheral brutes in the collection, has just hit his girlfriend Lois and wants to discuss his brutishness with the narrator. "So talk, already," Lois's friend Cherry tells the two men impatiently. "Go get a steak and talk. Be men all over the place. Practice spitting." The docile narrator hardly knows how to rise to this occasion, of course, and he's not sure what to tell Milby, whose anger is so alien to him. "The thing is," Milby sputters over the steak,

> "they take advantage of everything—all the differences—but you can't. You get pissed after a while."
>
> "Everybody gets pissed." I wonder why I don't tell him what I want to tell him, why he scares me. "Who's this 'they' anyway?"
>
> "The bitches—what are you, some Holy Ghost or something? I don't need catechism lessons, brother. It's jerks like you screw it up for the rest of us. I'm telling you it just happens, and you're telling me Hail Mary, full of grace. That's a big help."
>
> "Yeah, O.K.," I say, cutting through my steak. "You're probably right."

It's obvious that he doesn't really think Milby is right, but it's equally clear that this uneasy narrator, like the others in the collection, has no clue about what to expect of women—how much bitchiness, how much sympathy—or of himself.

In their confusion, Barthelme's men generally resort to some version of the gawky nerd gambit: "Hoping for quick intimacy," says the narrator of "Rain Check," "I start telling Lucille the things I'm afraid of." It's hopeless: "Lucille says she's not afraid of anything, so I shut up about loneliness." And when at the very end of the story Lucille apparently decides she's ready for intimacy and asks, "So. What about a shower?" the narrator is as insecure as ever, but cagier now:

> I give her a long look, letting the silence mount up. I stand there with her for a good two minutes, without saying a word, trying to outwait her, trying to see what's what. . . . She smiles at me as if she really does like me. Maybe we've been there longer than two minutes, but when the smile comes, I see her lips a little bit apart and her slightly hooded eyes, and she traces her fingers down my arm from the elbow to the wrist and stops there, loosely hooking her fingernails inside my shirt cuff, pinching my skin with her nails.

However lost and lonely these men may be, they are leery about being found by the reptilian women who abound, and Barthelme doesn't seem to blame them.

WITH TWO viperous wives and countless lovers behind him, the narrator of C.D.B. Bryan's *Beautiful Women; Ugly Scenes* is as lost as any of these men, and many times more loquacious. A 40-year-old TV documentary filmmaker living in the Connecticut suburbs, he takes comfort in "the trappings of being a father, a husband, a member of a family," as Delbanco's protagonists do, yet both his marriages have failed. At the same time, he's an incorrigible adulterer and has kept up with the singles culture—slightly less plastic but hardly more personal than Barthelme's Southwest scene. Yet, for all the beautiful flesh he's fondled (there's page after page of soft porn), too many of the feelings have been ugly. "It is very hard to be a man to a woman these days. . . . To know what a man, what being a man even means," he confesses more than once:

> Difficult to know how to behave toward women. Difficult to know what they wanted. I listened to them, read their books. They said they wanted something more. They wanted equality, self-respect. They wanted to feel close, they wanted to feel passion; they wanted to feel secure; they wanted to feel *whole*.

"Sensitive" and "caring" man that the nameless narrator portrays himself to be, he's ready to confront his failure to help women enjoy any of these amorphous feelings. He's even more eager, however, to declare his own yearnings for them. He is, after all, as vulnerable, open, and unfulfilled as any woman. It's his turn to be listened to, to write a book.

And what an unheroic story of hugging and heartbreak this is from the author of *Friendly Fire*, an acclaimed chronicle of hardship on a larger scale—

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the trauma the Vietnam War brought to one family. With much artless talk about "mid-life crises," "psychodramas," and "the games people play," Bryan's narrator undertakes an appraisal of his busy but dismal amorous career that sounds more like the confessions that have become a convention of pop psychology literature than like full-bodied fiction. As in *Moon Deluxe* and *About My Table*, the women have a monopoly on the tough attributes now (although they certainly don't yet have a corner on the job market; most are still at home). It was the "irreverence, ballsiness, pushiness" of his second wife Alice, the narrator says, that "appealed to something I felt lacking in me. Opposites attract." He's the one who wants to "make love," as languorously as possible, while his impatient partners have a more crudely carnal view of the activity. He's emotional and uncertain, in contrast to most of the women in his life, who tend to be calculating and decisive; while he balks, bewildered, at the prospect of divorce despite a hellish marriage, Alice is coldly plotting an escape with a man who will be able to support her in style. Throughout, the narrator aspires not to the conventional heroic ideal of autonomous selfhood, but to one of dependent intimacy.

THE PROBLEM is that his ideal seems to imply intimacy with a mother figure, rather than with a woman as liberated and well-rounded as he conceives himself to be. As he indirectly acknowledges, the kind of feminine strength and assertiveness that appeals to him is maternal, with no manliness about it. Thus, he finally turns to Odette, his salvation thanks to a local spouse swap: she's the French wife of a neighbor who has gone off with the narrator's wife. A woman from the old country where sexual fashions haven't changed so much, this patient angel welcomes a man whom she says "reminded me of an adolescent who had grown too fast: a little awkward, a little helpless, a little unsure of [him]self." Liberated though this man may look, he has lots of growing up left to do. His mid-life reassessment may have been purgative, but it's a protracted adolescence, not a paradise, that seems to lie ahead for him.

Most of the men in Delbanco's and Barthelme's stories are as awkward, helpless, and unsure as Bryan's narrator. They have come of age as feminism was flourishing and found that the old stern standards of masculinity and maturity don't really suit anymore. Neither, however, are new notions of manhood as comfortable as they might have hoped. Although Bryan's narrator has it on Odette's authority that "quiet and sensitive men" are what women want, the other characters in these books (and perhaps their creators as well) clearly are not sure what the ladies, often so loud and insensitive, would like. Whatever women's manly ideals might be, these men are full of ambivalence about their own aspirations for themselves. All of them may feel wiser for knowing the softer side of life. But most of them are also awash in doubts and identity problems, victims of familiar female dilemmas that threaten to leave them hollow, more wimpy than well-rounded.

If these men are not at peace with themselves, neither is the war between the sexes over. The quieter battles that continue in these books bring few victories for either life or literature. The male protagonists seem to have inherited the most debilitating of female qualities; in turn, their creators have bequeathed to the peripheral female characters the least appealing of masculine poses. Not surprisingly, the arrangement means they all lead discontented lives.

More important for the prospects of fiction, it means the men make unprepossessing literary heroes. (In the background, the women are rarely more than caricatures.) Embarked on the career of personal relationships, the protagonists have turned inward, and the uneasy narcissism that has replaced the old-style self-assertion proves to be a narrow field for fiction. The hugging and heartbreak in these stories and novel are often of more sociological than literary interest; acute observers, Delbanco, Barthelme, and Bryan get the manners just right—the décor, the relevant lusts and insecurities—but then fail to look very far beneath or beyond them. Their characters have little taste for the varied and vigorous experience of which strong plots are made. But equally rare among this lonely crowd is the moral sympathy that deepens characters and complicates their relations even in more circumscribed, domestic settings. The lives and stories of these men look thin and wan: new veins of feeling may have opened, but so has a deadly artery of anxiety.

ANN HULBERT

CORRESPONDENCE, *from page 2*

hardly qualify as massive. Despite noble efforts of both blacks and whites, racism is still riding high in this nation.

You gave wide space to highlighting black progress, but similar space was given to the dismal state of blacks now and the grim prospects for the future. You rightly pointed out that the worthy achievements of black millionaires and the existence of significant professional, educational, and entrepreneurial classes (and I may add, amateur and professional sportsmen and women, who are a great source of pride and joy), have not served as decisive role models, as one had hoped, for "the frustrated black streets."

As a layman and a black born and raised in Harlem, I have some definite ideas along those lines. Many problems confront our communities—poor schools, housing, police brutality, black-on-black crime, jobs, etc.—but I personally would put the focus on the young, with whom you have a fighting chance. There should be a United Negro College Fund geared to preschoolers and elementary school youth—a crash program to salvage as many of them as possible, especially in the inner cities of the North and West. The private schools would be the vehicle for such an enterprise. I stress "private" schools because the inner-city public schools are beyond salvation. It is the young who offer us some consolation when we contemplate the carnage and rubble of so much of black America.

DAVID LEWIS
Bronx, New York

To the editors:

I have been a loyal subscriber for six years and was stunned and dismayed at reading your editorial "March to Nowhere." A more gratuitous and myopic piece of liberal drivel would be hard to imagine. The generally presumptive and condescending tone, the calling to task of this country's black leadership by an entirely white editorial board, the interjection of glib calumny, and the relying on banal shibboleths about the excesses of affirmative action and the misery of the low-income black family join to render the article almost offensive.

DAVID L. ASCHHEIM
Washington, D.C.

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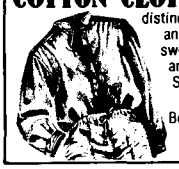

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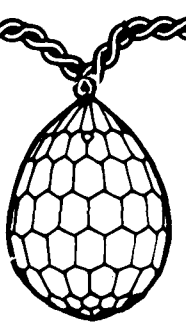

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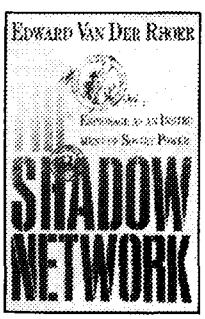

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WASHINGTON DIARIST

Love

ABOUT TWENTY YEARS too late, the U.S. Postal Service has joined the Now Generation with a new 20-cent stamp that says, simply, "LOVE." The four letters are formed out of flowers, no less, on a tasteful plain white background. Typically of a state-run monopoly, the Postal Service has completely missed the boat on this one. "Love" and suchlike sentiments—"peace," and so on—are of no interest to anyone anymore. "Love," I mean really. This is hardly in keeping with Administration policy. Couldn't they at least have made it "Love Through Strength"?

IN ANOTHER countercultural postal development, the radical left magazine *Mother Jones* is locked in battle with the Internal Revenue Service over whether the magazine deserves tax-exempt, "nonprofit" status and the cheaper postal rates that come with it. If the I.R.S. wins, *Mother Jones* will owe $390,000 in back postage and will have to pay $200,000 more a year just for its mailings in search of subscribers (sometimes referred to by ingrates outside the magazine industry as "junk mail"). *Mother Jones* claims the I.R.S. action is a "politically motivated" attempt to censor a vigorous critic of the Reagan Administration. Ironically skillful at all the techniques of advanced capitalism, including public relations, *Mother Jones* has managed to whip up a fine froth of concern among more establishment publications and authors about this so-called "First Amendment issue." I am not impressed. Many political magazines don't make a profit, alas, including the one you hold in your hands, but "nonprofit" status is intended for nonpolitical magazines of a charitable or educational nature. (Why high-minded boredom should get a federal subsidy is a question for another day.) I have gotten subscription offers from *Mother Jones* bragging that its "nonprofit" status frees it to say what "for-profit" magazines don't dare. This sounds nice and anticapitalist, but in fact it's exactly wrong: official "nonprofit" status hems you in with all sorts of restrictions, which is why many all-too-nonprofit magazines reject it despite the potential savings. Whatever its motivation, all the I.R.S. is saying is that *Mother Jones* should pay the same postage as *National Review* and other right-wing, Reagan-loving publications. How is that censorship? Through ineptitude, the I.R.S. in recent years has given nonprofit status to a few commercial magazines that clearly don't deserve it, such as *Ms.* (*Harper's*, where I used to work, got the nod from the I.R.S. but was turned down by the Postal Service.) But THE NEW REPUBLIC pays its own way, and so, if it wants to brag about its independence, should *Mother Jones*.

ONE OF THE MOST repulsive media creations of the 1980s is Mary Cunningham, the corporate sweetheart. I actually believed her tearful claim that she was a victim of sexist innuendo when people questioned her startling rise to the top at Bendix Corporation under William Agee (now her husband, then somebody else's). But she won't cuckold me soon again. According to a recent book about Bendix by Allan Sloan, *Three Plus One Equals Billions*, Bill Agee's sister once had trouble keeping up her mortgage payments, due to personal problems, and asked him for a loan. Instead, he put her on to Mary, who urged her to "go to the local press and plant a story about how the bank is taking advantage of a young woman with an illness." This advice comes from the same woman who claims that people pay her thousands of dollars for speeches because they're interested in her views on strategic planning, and also claims to dread publicity. Cunningham resigned last week from Seagram, where she has ostensibly spent the past two years planning the company's future in the wine industry. There is some dispute about what, exactly, she did for Seagram. The company recently doubled its share of the wine market by buying the wine subsidiary of Coca-Cola. Cunningham says this represents the culmination of her "plan," but critics who've read it say her "plan" recommended growth through expansion, not acquisition. If Cunningham is right and the essence of her "plan" for Seagram's future in wine—prepared with the help of two outside consulting firms—consists of recommending that Seagram should produce more wine and never mind how, this confirms my suspicions about the value of "strategic planning." Apparently not Seagram's, though. They have already hired Cunningham as an outside consultant.

IT STARTED OFF as a normal workday. I slunk past the receptionist, averted my gaze down a corridor of secretaries, research assistants, aides-de-camp, typists, and foreign policy advisers, shut my office door behind me, and hid under my desk until the mail arrived. There, however, was a letter from the "Research Institute of America" offering me a free report on "Cultivating Executive Stature." "Dear Executive," it began. I glanced over my shoulder, but apparently they meant me. "In every company there are one or two executives who stand out . . . who dominate conversations . . . control meetings. . . ." Yes, I know just the type. "They have Executive Stature." Not, perhaps, what I would have called it. Nevertheless, I sat up straighter (painfully bruising my head on the underside of the desk) and read on. After all, who would not want to know "the right ways to socialize with subordinates" and "the way to converse with a subordinate" and "how to fortify your stature in the event of a verbal confrontation with a subordinate" and even "at what point it is wise to put a forceful foot down—the six considerations that will bring you to a decision." Not only that, but Executive Stature at home: "novel ways to get understanding from family members," including "approaches to use with youngsters who downgrade the 'establishment' . . . plus general knowledge on drugs and other 'hang-ups' some youngsters claim as 'doing their own thing.' " I slipped a note under the door: "Dear Ms. Jones: Please order me 'Cultivating Executive Stature' unless it's any bother at all in which case forget it." Then I spent the day trying to tick off six considerations while standing on one foot.

M.K.

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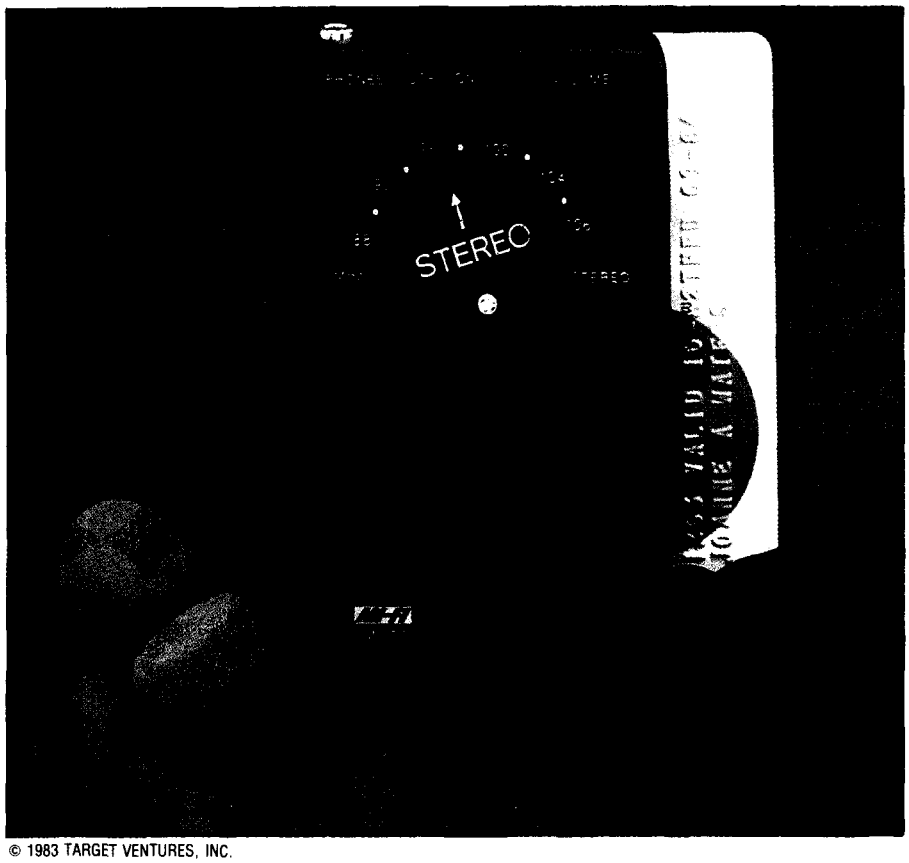

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Features To Surprise And Delight You!

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But one feature most MI-FI owners like best is actually something that's missing — an awkward, protruding metal antenna! On the MI-FI SHIRT POCKET STEREO, the super sensitive FM antenna is built right into the earphone cord!

Earphones Instead Of Headphones... FOR THE ULTIMATE IN COMFORT AND SOUND!

While its true that today's modern headphones have come a long way, THEY'RE NOW OBSOLETE when compared to the advanced mini-earphones supplied with the MI-FI SHIRT POCKET STEREO.

Tethered to a handy, 36" antenna cord with attached mini plug, these astounding contoured foam earphones are soft, cushiony and fit comfortably right in your ears.

They're so lightweight and miniature — and fit so securely even when you're wearing a hat — you can count on them to stay in place throughout the most vigorous exercise.

And all the while, they faithfully deliver excellent tone and fidelity — plus extraordinary sound brilliance — whether you're listening to a Beethoven concerto or a New Wave cacophony!

Take It – Use It – Anywhere!

The astonishing compactness of the MI-FI POCKET STEREO brings you a limitless range of listening opportunities.

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Listen to it while you're jogging, exercising or bicycling in the park.

Listen to it while you're gardening, working on a project or doing household chores — the MI-FI SHIRT POCKET STEREO is *never* slung over your shoulder so it *can't ever* get in the way!

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Power Out: 30 mW per channel
Frequency Response: 330HZ-15KHZ
Power Source: 2 "AAA" batteries (not included)
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